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J. A. MacCulloch.

With Introduction by the late MACLEOD of MACLEOD, C.M.G.

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> *"The Author thinks that neither Poet nor Artist has done justice to Skye; but perhaps he will allow us to say that one prose writer, at all events, has succeeded, and that is Canon MacCulloch."— "London Standard."*

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THE MISTY ISLE OF SKYE

" Jerusalem, Athens, and Rome,
I would see them before I die!
But I'd rather not see any one of the three,
Than be exiled for ever from Skye!

. . . . . .

" Lovest thou mountains great,
Peaks to the clouds that soar,
Corrie and fell where eagles dwell,
And cataracts dash evermore?
Lovest thou green grassy glades,
By the sunshine sweetly kist,
Murmuring waves, and echoing caves?
Then go to the Isle of Mist."

SHERIFF NICOLSON.

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The Observer Press, Stirling

ON THE TOWER, DUNVEGAN CASTLE

Sunset in June

THE MISTY ISLE OF SKYE

ITS SCENERY, ITS PEOPLE, ITS STORY

BY

J. A. MACCULLOCH

Formerly Rector of St. Columba's Church, Portree

With an Introduction by the late

MACLEOD OF MACLEOD, C.M.G.

ENEAS MACKAY

STIRLING

EXILED FROM SKYE

THE sun shines on the ocean,
And the heavens are blue and high,
But the clouds hang grey and lowering
O'er the misty Isle of Skye.

I hear the blue-bird singing,
And the starling's mellow cry,
But I love the peewit's screaming
In the distant Isle of Skye.

The trees are grand and lofty,
And the grass grows sweet and high,
But I long to see the heather
In the purple Isle of Skye.

The streams are broad and stately,
And the meadows fertile lie,
But I hear the streamlets leaping
Down the rocky glens of Skye.

There's a singing in the cornfields
As the breeze goes whispering by,
But I love the bracken's rustle
On the lonely hills of Skye.

And I'd rather hear the music,
When my time may come to die,
Of the wind among the corries
In the far-off Isle of Skye.

MARY JULIA MACCULLOCH.

To

MACLEOD OF MACLEOD, C.M.G.

DEAR MACLEOD,

It is fitting that I should dedicate this book to you. You have been interested in its making and in its publication, and how flattering that is to an author's vanity! And what chief is there who is so beloved of his clansmen all over the world as you, or whose name is such a household word in dear old Skye as is yours? A book about Skye should recognise these things, and so I inscribe your name on this page.

Your sincere friend,

Feb., 1905. *THE AUTHOR.*

INTRODUCTION TO THIRD EDITION

IT would be hard to find a more useful or more interesting book than Canon MacCulloch's *The Misty Isle*, and the many summer visitors to Skye will welcome Mr. Mackay's enterprise in bringing out this new edition. I need not allude to the many attractions of Skye, for they are fully described by the Author, but perhaps I may be permitted to repeat Sir Walter Scott's testimony to the magnificent scenery in the Coolin Hills. In a letter, dated 3rd March, 1815, which now hangs on the walls of Dunvegan Castle, Scott says : " I venture to send a copy of a Poem (*The Lord of the Isles*) which owes its best passages to MacLeod's kindness and taste in directing me to visit the extraordinary scenery between his country and Strathaird, which rivals in grandeur and desolate sublimity anything that the Highlands can produce." It may be of interest here to mention that Lord Francis Hervey has lately brought out a small book, *The Lone Shieling*, to prove that the touching lament of the exiles in Canada was written by Sir Walter Scott.

" From the lone shieling on the misty island,
Mountains divide us, and the waste of seas ;
Yet still the blood is strong, the heart is Highland,
And we in dreams behold the Hebrides.
Fair these broad meads—these hoary woods are grand :
But we are exiles from our Fathers' land."

Lord Francis has certainly made out a very strong case. Since those days the population of the Misty Isle has dwindled, but after the war the Government bought a considerable amount of land (about 60,000 acres from the MacLeod estate alone) for the express purpose of settling ex-Service men on the land. I earnestly hope that this effort will be a success, and that we may see the Glens of Skye filled with a hardy and thriving population. In my soldiering days, about 1870, I once asked the Colonel why he kept a recruiting party in Portree, when they got so few recruits. His answer was : " When I do get one, he is such a good one."

NORMAN M. MACLEOD,
OF MACLEOD.

DUNVEGAN CASTLE,
7th April, 1927.

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THE MISTY ISLE OF SKYE

CHAPTER I

CHARACTERISTICS

"Skye's romantic shore."—SCOTT.

THERE are travelled persons, deeply read in *Baedeker* and *Murray*, who merely ignore the Isle of Skye. To others, untravelled, it is only a name; while to both it is dimly suggestive of something remote and savage and windy, a weary land where the comforts of civilisation are not to be had for love or money. Yearly, a few adventurous tourists come as birds of passage, or, if they are sportsmen, armed with rod and gun, stay for a longer period. Their impressions are various, depending on the personal equation, still more upon the weather. If it rains, they are ready to curse God and die. If the sun shines and the air is still and the sky blue, they affect to believe themselves the victims of an illusion, and can scarce credit that anything so fine should dare to exist so far away.

But let them be as open-minded as they please, or as favourably dealt with as can be, they do not enjoy to the full the flavour of the Isle of Skye. The tourist is too much engaged scampering from hotel to hotel, the sportsman too much preoccupied with birds and dogs, to understand the rare charm, or to

discover even a tenth part of the beauty of Skye. For that, you must live there, year in, year out, summer and winter, in sunshine and storm; you must experience the marvellous charm of its spring and early summer days, when the air is like a fine wine and the landscape seems unreal because it is so beautiful; you must let the gloom of its winter melancholy pierce your soul to its depths, until some morning you awaken to an enchanted day and the melancholy is routed, and you wonder that it ever could have been. And if you are not a native of Skye, but have come from the settled and commonplace landscapes and surroundings of the south, all the more will the magic of the place charm and please you. On the other hand, it is possible that you will merely detest and hate the place, and wish yourself well out of it. You will be hard to please, and not open to magic influences. But you will either hate it or love it, for no *via media* has yet been discovered.

The fact that Skye is an island, without railways and with (until lately) only indifferent roads, that it is so far removed from the busy centres of civilisation, and that its population is so scattered, has a curious effect. Living in a crowded district, one's interests are local, and one hardly knows what is happening even a few miles off. But here distance is nothing when you may have to go ten miles to visit a neighbour. Everyone is known to you, whether they live east or west, north or south; and everything that goes on becomes almost a personal interest to you. In olden days, when the people of all the larger houses were nearly all related, this was even more striking, and news travelled apace from one corner to another, even when there was no telegraph to carry it. This is all the more surprising when it is considered that the island is fifty miles long and from seven to twenty-five broad, and that every part of it is isolated from another by hills and valleys, streams and winding sea-lochs. For this

last reason the length of coast-line is out of all proportion to the area, and measures thousands of miles. The area of the island is, roughly, 350,000 acres.

On the map the Isle of Skye, with its numerous peninsulas (like flying buttresses) starting outwards from a common centre, is suggestive of some strange wild-fowl. Hence travellers from the sixteenth century onwards have derived its native name Eilean Sgiathanach from the Gaelic *sgiath*, a wing, transformed in the Norse sagas into Skid.[1] Whether, without a map, the winged formation would be likely to strike the primitive inhabitant is uncertain. Other learned philologists debate the claims of roots signifying cloud, mist, and sword, or maintain that here stood the winged temple which fable apportioned to Apollo among the Hyperboreans. But it is a far cry from Hellas to Skye, and only pedantic Celtic antiquaries (the most pedantic of all pedants) will trace the connection. To Oisin (or Macpherson) the island is always *Eilean a Cheo*, the Isle of Mist.

These peninsulas are most pronounced to the north and the south, but on the eastern and western sides there is a series of curtailed promontories, divided by narrow lochs. They present a curious variety of surface and seaboard. On the north the peninsulas are formed of wild and tumbled uplands, rising into strangely contorted rocks at Storr and Quiraing, with precipitous cliffs on the eastern coast-line. In the west these uplands mount occasionally into considerable hills with heathery flanks and flattened summits. The southern region resumes the upland country, but is so much more fertile as to be called "the garden of Skye." It is in the centre and running across the island from north-east to south-west that the great mountains are found,

[1] Ptolemy transliterated the native name into Greek, Σκῆτις; in ecclesiastical Latin (Adamnan's, for example) the island is called Scia.

rounded and massy and huddled together to the north-east; steep, precipitous, and splintered towards the south-west, where the Coolins dominate the landscape for many a mile. All these breezy uplands are covered with heather and bent, bracken and bog-myrtle, which, on warm summer days, make the air fragrant with odorous scents such as Keats would have loved. They are given over to sheep, save where in more or less fertile patches the crofting population seek their livelihood from the soil. But they are empty solitudes where one may wander for a whole day and receive no human greeting. As far as eye can reach there are lines of gently swelling hills; you mount one, and still they deploy to the horizon, or suddenly lose themselves in a narrow loch or the wider sea.

Yet in this apparent monotony there is an infinite variety. The summer glory of these uplands under a sapphire sky, surrounded by azure seas; their autumn and winter melancholy; the splintered summits looming grimly in the distance; here and there steep, windy headlands; green valleys with burns tinkling down to the sea; the glorious tang of the breeze; the ever-changing mystic lights and shadows—these, with the hoary traditions and tales of eld which are suggested by them at every step, are pleasures which do not easily pall.

Thus the Isle of Skye offers such a bundle of delights as are not easily found in any place even less remote than it is from the busy centres of life and the madding crowd. To the exterior eye it presents so many natural features that the bare catalogue of them bewilders, how much more does the joyous experience of them fascinate. Great basalt cliffs hang their steep castellated fronts above a brilliant green slope, and face the sea. From their top you gaze down a thousand feet into a vast abysmal depth of blue water, or across its sundering tide to the dark summits of the northern counties. Far out to sea on the western side are

purple islands gleaming on the horizon. Above you are the immeasurable spaces of the sky, across which a seabird now poises itself like some uncertain angel, and now darts off with an incredible swiftness and dæmonic clamour. Here and there the sea sends long arms far inland, so that the unvoyaged islander (to whom Portree is a metropolis and Glasgow a merely mythical Babylon), confined to his moorland solitudes, can touch the pulse of the unseen and infinite ocean, on which stately ships are hurrying to far lands beyond the sunrise and the sunset, where are busy ports thronged with men and echoing with the hum of endless activity. To speak by the map and the geographer's compass, no part of the island, large as it is, lies four miles from the sea, so much is it broken up by these lochs winding in among the moors and the bases of the hills. This recurring presence of the sea has a strange fascination for the mind. It presents itself in the most unexpected places. The solid masses of the Coolins, or the broad miles of rolling uplands, suggest a land free from these indentations and murmuring waters. But no; you have scarce proceeded half a league when you skirt the upper reaches of a sea-loch, and in the next mile or two you are walking by the edge of a second.

Inland and around these lochs the billowy moorland swells and falls, or mounts up into a considerable hill. From these hills the air comes pure from its high elevation and sweet with a hundred rustic odours of upland flowers. Its extent and its mysterious hollows, its black peat-hags, and its strange silence, suggest weird thoughts of ambushes, of hidden deeds, of brooding secrets, until you almost expect some voice, tired of its immemorial silence, to shout them aloud to all the winds. In summer and autumn the moor exhilarates with its omnipresent perfume wafted from bog-myrtle and bracken, while it seems to fling itself to the horizon in a purple garment dappled with emerald green.

But in winter and early spring that green has become a wan white, and the purple has turned to dingy brown, and the sombre landscape seems to speak of still deeper mysteries. Every varying expression of the face of the sky, its summer joy, its April doubt, its winter gloom, is reflected with conscientious exactness on this equally expressive moorland countenance.

A great part of these uplands forms a rich and happy hunting-ground for the sportsman. Grouse, snipe, woodcock, and hares are found in plenty. Some of the loftier ground gives sanctuary to the red deer, with which the island must have teemed at one time, for in the sixteenth century organised hunts, in which a thousand head were killed, took place among the Red Hills. But the greater part of Skye is let out in sheep-farms, for, like the Homeric Ithaca, it is *a pasture-land of sheep, and more pleasant in my sight than one that pastureth horses; for of all the isles that lie and lean upon the sea, none are fit for the driving of horses, or rich in meadow-land, and least of all is Ithaca.*[1] The pasture is scanty enough in winter, when the uplands are like a moist sponge with the rains; and the bulk of the hoggs have to be sent to the mainland in autumn, to return in spring, but, like the daffodil, "before the swallow does." Here, too, are none of the active, shaggy, goat-like sheep of Uist and St. Kilda; only the familiar black-face and Cheviot; but the flavour of their flesh has gained something, and the fame of Skye mutton has passed into a proverb. The crofters, who covet earnestly the best land and would seize it, if they could, regardless of ownership, hate sheep-farms and sheep alike, and, in their native Gaelic, which I translate for the mere Sassenach, describe the animals as "beastly brutes of poll-heads." As for their language towards farmers and lairds, let the rest be silence! Large fortunes were once amassed

[1] *Odyssey*, iv. 610, Lang's translation.

by Skye farmers, and more than one small tenant-farmer, beginning in a humble way, has found himself in the glorious company of the *nouveaux riches* before he died. But the day for that is over, and much more modest returns must be looked for.

Of the hills and mountains of Skye there will be much to say. It is enough here to recall their haunting presence, their magic lights, the solemn grandeur and beauty that is theirs at all times of the year. You look at them across the wide moors, and they *touch the last cloud upon the level sky*. Steeped in moonlight or clad in glittering snow under a cloudless sky, they seem ethereal, transparent. At dawn and sunset, every scaur and hollow, every corrie and precipice, has all the definite clearness of a fine steel engraving. Or when wreaths of mist roll along their flanks, or cloud-masses huddle together around them, they are still grand and impressive. Seeing them under these varied conditions, and with ever-changing *nuances* of light or colour, you would vow there are no such hills elsewhere. Those who have not so seen them will scoff—and no doubt the vow marks the insular mind; but what is their sneer against the opinion of an eye-witness?

Again, there is infinite delight in the colours of the landscape. Mostly these are what the indifferent would call sad and monotonous. Yet can the keen eye discover something richer. Even in winter there is variety, and there is a gorgeousness about the moors and the hillsides, when late autumn turns the bracken to a rich brown, and the sun casts blue shadows everywhere, which is not to be gainsaid. Often, too, at high summer noontides there comes a blue Italian sky, which is at once discredited by those who do not know the island when they see it reproduced by the artist. Then the sea is turned to a deeper azure, flecked with whitest foam where it swings unceasingly against the cliffs. The seabird, poising itself overhead,

has wings of transparent alabaster, through which the blue heaven seems almost visible. Ireland itself cannot have greener valleys than Skye; nor could the choicest English woodland or meadow boast a richer variety or a greater luxuriance of wildflowers. And if the air is still, and you have risen with the lark, and inhaled the rich odour of the moorland air, you will say that nature looks as fresh and as young as it first did on the seventh morning before Paradise had been lost. As day wears on, the blaze of sunshine touches everything with a dull burnish of gold. The island is indolent as ever was the land of the lotus-eaters, and there is no mountain nor crag but has lost its ruggedness and now seems voluptuous with gentle swellings and softened curves.

Yet it would be futile to deny the desolation of Skye in some of its aspects. Let the clouds hang low down overhead and everywhere around on a short winter day, as if they would crush the land; let the rain fall in blinding torrents for weeks, and the morning dawn cheerless over a dripping landscape; let the wind rave across the moorland with pitiless incessancy; and let there be the least melancholy in your heart, and *then* you will know something of the abomination of desolation. You will understand "that distress" (of which Maupassant writes so grimly) "which sometimes seizes travellers on certain sad evenings, in certain desolate places. It seems that everything is near its ending —existence and the universe itself. You perceive sharply the dreadful misery of life, the isolation of everyone, the nothingness of all things, and the black loneliness of the heart which nurses itself and deceives itself with dreams until the hour of death." So it is, sometimes, in Skye; until there comes a day of sunshine, and all is forgotten, and the desolation passes away as if it had never been.

Throughout the island are many houses, bare, unattractive, but strong stone structures, the homes

of many generations, standing solitary on the moor, or hidden away under the kindly fold of a hill. To live in them is to call up a hundred phantoms of the past, to touch bygone years, to listen unawares to Time's stolen flight. Nor is there wanting a sense of depression as one thinks how these walls once held so many who have now fallen on sleep. No old house is ever without these sad memories and pallid gleams of past years. But the vast solitudes in which these Skye houses are set, the miles of road traversed to approach them, the brooding silence that hangs around their walls, as if pregnant with some mystery which is always on the point of being revealed, intensify this haunting sense of those who made them their caravanserai. There, in years gone by, the gentlemen tacksmen, cadets sometimes of the great houses, dwelt, and their sons went forth to fight the battles of their country. From one of them it is said that more officers came during the Peninsular War than from any other single house in the British Empire. Many of these houses are small, and but little better than cottages. They could have contained but few of the luxuries of life; yet from them came scores of the brave soldiers and builders of our empire, and they were often lit up by festive occasions, the dance, the cheerful laughter of unencumbered hearts, the smiles of fair women. Boswell's *Journal* of the famous tour shows at once the comfort in discomfort which prevailed, and contains many a picture of the happy houseful of friends, who were mostly kinsmen, crowded into a few small rooms, where constant good-humour, aided (can we doubt it) by copious drams, prevailed.

The grey and brown landscape seems to forbid such prettiness in architecture as the Swiss châlet, hanging on the mountain-side, exhibits. The crofter's hut, with its low, lichen-covered walls, and its roof thatched with the materials of the surrounding moor, seems to have grown out of its surroundings. It is a product of nature, not of

art, or rather of the artificer. It rhymes with the sober landscape, and partakes of its shaggy wildness. Even the larger houses have the same unadorned character, plain grey stone walls, four square gables, built for use not beauty. Such a castle as Dunvegan has the same natural appearance as these small unarchitectural attempts at house-building. It forms no break in the landscape, but seems only a more shapely form of the rock on which it stands. No bird-haunted lawns, no terraces and stairways, separate stately decorated walls from the surrounding landscape. Grim keep and ancient tower and worn battlements join hand-in-hand with the brown moorland, the shaggy woodland, and the lapping waves. They who reared it in centuries gone by "built better than they knew," or else had a true sense of the relation of art and nature to each other.

But there is a still more remote antiquity than those old stone walls hint of. There are ruined heaps on windy hillocks; mounds of stone underneath which *lie the mighty bones of ancient men, old knights*; a few roughly sculptured monuments. They speak silently of *old, unhappy, far-off things*, and of unremembered wars, which have left no record in history, scarce even has their faint echo been preserved in local tradition. The moor-bird flies around them with its wailing cry, as if regretting old mortality, but of the men who placed them there or whose deeds they commemorate, the rest is silence. Norse names, especially in the north and west, testify to raids by these ancient sea-wolves, and of a Scandinavian occupation long enough to have made itself felt in the nomenclature, though it scarcely survives in race. History speaks of Haco and his fleet, and Kyleakin is Haco's Strait; but tradition is once more silent, leaving to the philologist the task of explaining the place names by Norwegian parallels.

Of the race earlier than the Celtic — Neolithic,

possibly Pictish—there remain still scantier traces, whether of their social life, their manners, or their religion. Yet in these green valleys and along the shores of the sea-lochs they must have formed a dense population. There are to be seen, not plentifully but occasionally, "Picts' houses," stone circles, and burial-chambers, and at times the arms and utensils of these early generations are dug out of the peat. They speak dumbly of the manners and customs of a far-distant past, and hint to us moderns that the same human heart beat then, and cherished such hopes and fears, such loves and hates, then, as it does now.

And the story of the rocks of Skye carries the mind back to an unpeopled and illimitable past. Ice-scratched cliffs, *rôches-moutonnées*, beds of boulder clay, tell of the time when vast glaciers crept down these green valleys to the outer sea. The terraced uplands, the purple Coolins, and the Red Hills, carry us over millions of years to the Tertiary period, when great plateaux of lava were laid down, and within and beneath them internal outbursts took place through an enormous period of time. Beneath these lie beds of strata, crowded with fossils, witnessing to ages of submersion when the island lay beneath the midmost sea.

Thus, in Skye, antiquity accompanies one at every step, and the mind has a liberal choice of bygone ages to revel in, from the romantic days of Prince Charlie back through the voiceless generations to those dim ages when the island was built up, stratum by stratum, out of the unknown deep.

CHAPTER II

THE METROPOLIS OF SKYE

"If people were aware how slow Time journeyed in that village, and what armfuls of spare hours he gives, over and above the bargain, to its wise inhabitants, I believe there would be a stampede out of . . . a variety of large towns, where the clocks lose their heads, and shake the hours out each one faster than the other, as though they were all in a wager."—STEVENSON.

IN Dr. Johnson's time Portree boasted "a tolerable inn," though when Prince Charles visited it twenty-seven years earlier the landlord could not produce more than thirteen shillings in change for a guinea. A parish church served the large district, but there was no village near, only a few scattered huts. When the caustic pedant, Dr. MacCulloch, visited the island, he said that Portree boasted one sign of civilisation, namely, a jail, but even then the houses were few, as appears from a contemporary picture of the place. But for years past its population has increased, and now numbers about a thousand. The tourist traffic has caused several hotels to be built; the increase of business has erected banks and lawyers' offices; crime demands a court-house and an improved jail; and religious differences have filled the place with churches.

Apart from the beautiful Episcopal church of St Columba, with its gorgeous window dedicated to the memory of Skye's heroine, Flora Macdonald, the town itself has few architectural beauties. Round the harbour sweeps a crescent of houses, and piled

above them, in the upper town, mingled with trees, are still more houses. Beyond these is the square; on the outskirts are more pretentious dwellings; and round all is the open moorland and the rising hills. The bay lies in a natural basin, surrounded by hills and cliffs; across the channel lies Raasay, and beyond it are the hills of Torridon. To say that the town, which occupies one edge of this basin, was a busy centre would be a gross exaggeration. Steamers come and go, bringing mails and cargoes; these connect the place with the outer world; carts move leisurely pierwards or countrywards to carry off these cargoes; the country-folk come in to town with their shaggy ponies bearing panniers to do their shopping; the place swarms with shops; yet at any hour of the day you may look upon the square or wander through the streets and fancy yourself in Sleepy Hollow. Business goes slowly and requires much cogitation and lengthy discussion; as leisurely goes pleasure; and though now and then some new game or sport is attacked, enthusiasm, never very strong, soon dies down and things become as they were. Yet the game of shinty is played with something approaching to enthusiasm, and if a dance is announced a real frenzy is awakened and the *hoochs* of the reel-dancers wake the echoes of the assembly room till dawn steals through the windows. Culture is not forgotten: there is a literary society, a library, and a reading-room. The muses haunt the place: report speaks of a dramatic society in the past, and in the present there is a flourishing choral union. Yet all this quiet life, where nothing is done in a hurry and where things still get done in time, has a real attraction for minds innocent and quiet. The stir of existence dies away to an inarticulate murmur. Far off, no doubt, life moves with its wonted bustle and clatter and hurry; but it *is* far off, and one has lost taste for it. The years come and go, unmarked by outstanding events; the lives of all are known and every face is familiar; there is a conspiracy for

quietude, and save when the usual strife of village factions becomes too evident, the conspiracy succeeds in its aim. There is something kindly and ultra-human about this quiet life. You are in a town and yet the moorland comes rolling up into the streets. The hills look down on you at every corner, and below you is the loch with its blue waters. Nature invades you at every step, and forbids your petty humours and feverish ambitions.

The whole natural surroundings of Portree make it one of the most beautiful spots on the western coast of Scotland. The narrow entrance to the bay is guarded on both sides by lofty cliff formations. On the south side is Ben Tianavaig, a basaltic hill piled on masses of oolite, which at the sea's edge are riddled with caves, the haunt of rock-pigeons. Its sides are curiously contorted and weather-worn, but among its outcropping rocks and boulders are large patches of rich green pasturage. Opposite, on the north side, are the frowning headlands of Creag Mhor or the Beal, and Ben Chracaig, basaltic precipices, from which a long green slope, its base strewn with black boulders, runs down to the sea. Far up on the latter a black slit denotes the entrance to a narrow and lofty cave, the Piper's Cave, which tradition says runs through the island and emerges again at Loch Bracadale. Another name for it and an older one is MacCoitar's Cave. MacCoitar was a brigand in ancient times, who sallied forth from this dark and damp dwelling-place to plunder the neighbourhood, and then returned with the spoil. On the beach below is a boulder which a Raasay man threw at his wife. It missed her, but with such violence was it thrown that it flew across the sound and fell here! Such tales do the fishermen tell each other as they go sailing out into the west. Past Ben Chracaig is the harbour itself, with the town rising above it, while away beyond are the billowy moors and the ridges of the Storr valley. To the west of the harbour and just above the town

is "Fancy Hill" (what a name!), a rounded promontory, covered with trees, from which, standing as it does in the centre of the natural basin, a magnificent view of the surrounding country is to be had. Behind it the loch turns inland at a right angle, and becomes gradually shallower, so that it is uncovered at low water. Fingal's Seat, a long ridge-like summit, overlooks the town and the upper part of the loch ; while far away to the south, but yet appearing so near as to form another side of the basin, are the jagged peaks of the Coolins. These, with the rounded Red Hills and the lion-like mass of Glamaig to their left, form a wonderfully overpowering and ever-present feature of the scene. Morning, noon, and night, summer and winter, in storm or sunshine, magic lights and shadows play across these hills, or mist and cloud seem to deepen the sense of mystery which broods around them. The purple rocks of the Coolins seem to defy the efforts of the sun to soften their rugged outlines, save at some high noontide or in the winter sunshine, when the hills are covered with snow. Then they melt away into a semi-transparent cloud, and hang magically against the sky, transmuted almost to its own ethereal beauty. But the Red Hills with their rosy tints seem always bathed in light, and invite the sunshine, even on a cloudy day, to play upon their sides. The bay itself, opening into the Sound of Raasay, is always beautiful. On a calm day it is a mirror reflecting the rocks and summits which enclose it. Or in darker weather it catches the leaden hues of the sky, and deepens the contrast with the purple hills around it.

Thus it is easy to see that the natural surroundings of Portree make it what it is, and this suggests a closer treatment of some of them. The tourist who makes Portree his headquarters, and from there dashes off to see the Quiraing, or Coruisk, or the Coolins, or Dunvegan, knows little of the charming "bits" so near at hand, where so much variety and

beauty is spread before and around one. If he be of an independent turn of mind, he may discover some of them for himself, but this seldom happens, and their true value remains known only to those who live year in year out in their midst, and can wander to them at the appropriate season.

Between the two frowning basaltic cliffs on the north side of the entrance to the bay the oolite which everywhere underlies the basalt is exposed to view. It runs sloping upwards in long yellow strata full of fossils far above the blue waters, and on its top lies a lush green meadow. In one or two places wind and weather have eroded the cliff and left great hollows under a canopy of stone where one may sit in quiet and look down on the placid sea, or watch the lights and shadows changing on the rugged face of Ben Tianavaig across the bay. Here and there a limpid fountain trickles down through a deep crevice lined with thick curtains of moss, where lurk hartstongue ferns and black maiden-hair, or in the drier cracks of the limestone the rare little wall-rue or the glossy sea spleenwort. Thyme overhangs the cliff's edge, and the oolite is everywhere channelled and grooved, and in these grooves and channels ivy has taken a firm hold, so that it sometimes completely hides the rock beneath a deep green mantle. Its roots, where they are exposed, are of the thickness of a man's arm. In the meadow which runs inshore grow hemlock, meadow-sweet, and purple vetch, often as high as one's head; in the more barren patches peep blue violets, masses of eyebright, the green sun-spurge, the golden buttercup, or, earlier in the year, the pale primrose and the purple hyacinth.

A little beyond are the crumbling stones of one of those tiny ancient Celtic churches, rude in architecture, in which the voice of praise has long been silent, and where the too luxurious vegetation girdles the long-forgotten graves, and lulls them to a deeper sleep. But not all, for there is one stone

of recent erection with a touching epitaph. It tells of a sailor who, weary of life, committed suicide in the loch. He was buried here, not in the parish churchyard, and rumour hints darkly of those who, thinking even this ancient place of graves too sacred for the bones of one who had raised an impious hand against himself, cast him back once more into the sea. Peace be to his soul, wherever his body lies. "He was a faithful servant to his earthly master." A ludicrous story attaches itself to this place. Two solitary trees rise gaunt and high among the deserted ruins. They mark the graves of the successive wives of an islander who kept their memory green by these memorials, but who, when his time came that men should gird and carry him, found none to do the like for him.

Above this old churchyard is a narrow glen down which a burn trickles to the sea. It terminates in the precipitous flank of the cliff, over which the water dashes, through masses of birch and hazel, forming a cool, shadowy grotto with deep recesses where lurk asplenia and holly-fern in plenty. All around are thick clumps of fern and bracken, beds of yellow primroses, blue violets, white anemones, while the air is scented with their perfumes and the aromatic odour of the bracken. Overhead is the black frowning cliff, looking as if it would suddenly dash itself downwards. Beyond it is the ruined heap of Dun Torvaig, and near by the gable of the ancient house of Scorrybreck. Somewhere here Prince Charles hid from his pursuers after having crossed to Skye from Raasay, beyond the sound. Far below are the ruined church, the green meadow, the rolling sea. In front is Creag Mhor, rising skywards ; across the water is Raasay and the steep flanks of Ben Tianavaig, and in the far distance Ben Alligin looks down upon the glories of Loch Torridon. You see all this on an early summer day, when sea and sky are sapphire and a haze hangs over the slopes of Raasay with their variegated surface of

brown and grey and green. The lambs are calling, the plovers are shrieking, the gulls poising themselves irresolutely in mid-air, and then, with a wild cry, darting off into the far distance ; some fishing-boats are putting out to sea, their brown sails now bellying, now collapsing, as they tack hither and thither, seeking for a breeze. These are the only signs of life in the joyous landscape, and you feel how good a thing it is to be alive, while the air is full of the tang of the sea and the perfumes of summer, and the eye rests gladly on the beauty of earth and sea.

Half a mile from Portree on the side of Fingal's Seat is another narrow glen, down which a burn leaps and dashes, swollen in times of rain to a roaring torrent. To wander along its precipitous sides, or climb up its rocky bed, is a lesson in rock-carving and geological lore. At its entrance, just where the banks begin to rise in steep acclivities, you look up through a long green vista of bushes (in which the birch is most prominent, each tiny leaf glittering in the sunshine), and a thick under-growth of bracken and fern, amidst which the water gleams as it courses along. Above it is a piled mass of greenery and shaggy heath-edged cliffs, through which the sky is perceived. At the end of this ravine is an amphitheatre of basalt, forming a cool grotto, shut in from the world. The water shoots over the rock in a white cascade down into a deep brown pool. Brown and green mosses, ferns, wood-sorrel, nestling primroses and violets, grass and heather, fringe the edges of the cascade and the rocky walls. Here, too, in their due season may be found in luxuriance anemones, wild hyacinths, starwort, ladies-fingers, vetches, the cuckoo-flower, orchids, globe-flowers, and grey lichens which make the rocks look hoary with age. Far above this natural cup is the blue sky, flecked with fleecy clouds. The air echoes with the plash of the water into the pool below. And far outside the narrow

sides of the glen is seen a background of woodland and moor and bold cliffs which (as we know) look down on the restless sea. The shadow of a cloud moves silently over the moor; far off is the precipitous front of Storr; but unless you emerge from the glen to seek it, the town, fringed with shadowy woodlands, is completely hidden. It is a silent land, where the rippling waters and the birds' song and the bleating of the sheep alone invade the ear as the lingering hours go by, and the sun crosses the sky in the remote infinity.

Farther up the watercourse there is another of these amphitheatres, more open to the day. But here a bold bluff of rock, jutting forward, has split the stream into two channels, down which its waters swiftly course, eager to meet once more. One of these channels is formed by a trap dyke in the basalt, forming, as it has been eroded, a series of steps and stairs over which the water leaps in succession. Higher up, the stream is gradually lost amid a series of lesser burns which well up in the moorlands and on the slopes of Fingal's Seat, far above.

Fingal's Seat is easy to climb, for it is not a high hill (it is only 1367 feet in height), but because of the curious conformation of the bay and its surroundings, the landscape, as one ascends, is strangely foreshortened. Ben Tianavaig, the sentinel cliffs, and the miniature jutting promontories have the appearance of a picture-map, as the bay winds among them, while the town is dwarfish and looks no bigger than a child's toy. It is a deceptive hill, for the ridge seen from below is not the summit. After reaching that, some boggy ground must be crossed, in which the winter torrents have made curious islands of black peat, covered on the top with grass and moss. The second top is soon reached, but from there one must ascend for twenty minutes longer to the real top with its large cairn of stones. Here, if the cold winds of March are blowing and cutting like a razor, one is glad to

shelter behind the cairn, and from that vantage ground let the glory of the scene sink into the mind. Its general appearance is this. The moor falls away from before the eye, and then on all sides rises and dips again, rolling to the horizon in a hundred fantastic waves. Its colours are distracting at a later time of the year. You note chiefly purple heather, brown mosses, green grasses, yellow lichens, and emerald patches among the waste, but there are scores of intermediate tints, which make the harmony of the picture. And there are glimpses of far-off seas beyond intervening summits, and islands, and capes, and necks of land.

Then the details of the scene force themselves upon the attention. The Storr, with the Old Man pointing upwards, is the most prominent object to the north, while a great space of moorland rising into prominent ridges stretches to the west and south of it. Bending southwards in a long curve on the horizon is the mainland, with the Torridon Hills capped with snow in winter, purple or pink in summer, the summits of Applecross and Loch Carron, then the great peak of Ben Screel, and the peaks above Loch Hourn. In the middle distance lie the rocky isle of Rona, Raasay, Ben Tianavaig, and Scalpa. And far below our feet the waters of the bay twist in and out among the forelands into the sound, which is again dimly perceived gleaming beyond Scalpa under the shadow of Ben-na-Cailleach. Turning round to the south-west, one sees the mystic Red Hills, Glamaig, Blaaven, the pyramidal granitic mass of Marsco, the small peaks at the end of Glen Sligachan, and then the vast purple range of the Coolins, frowning darkly on the scene, showing innumerable precipices and needle-like points, and dominating the mind like some vision of immensity. Away in the distance to the right are the dark summits of Rum; then comes the silvery gleam of far Loch Bracadale with its islands and the precipitous cliffs which guard its entrance, the top

of Talisker Head, and, farther off, Idrigil Point, with just the heads of MacLeod's Maidens appearing beyond it. Outside Loch Bracadale lies South Uist, and the lofty hills of North Uist are dimly seen athwart bars of golden light which seem to shame the grey hues of this March day. Sweeping round, the eye lights on the flat tops of MacLeod's Tables and Dunvegan Head, then the cones of Harris, and so back to Storr. It is a circle on whose circumference rise over a hundred peaks. Immediately to the north is Loch Snizort winding far inland, and just below Storr, like a bright eye piercing the dark moorland, is one of the far-famed trout lochs lying in the deep valley.

From all sides of the country great clouds of blue smoke, with here and there the flare of red fires, tell where the heather is being burnt. The smoke gives a hazy summer effect to the cold air and to the wan face of the moorland, across which white roads wind to remote parts of the island. There is hardly, in all that vast expanse, a patch which is perfectly flat. All is rugged, broken, diversified; there deep valleys, here rising mounds, and everywhere the grey face of the rock breaking through the heather.

Thus it is easy to see that Portree has all the advantages of a town in daily touch with the great outer world, conjoined with the attractions of a glorious country which offers every variety of scenery, and which at once inspires the mind and invigorates the body. On spring evenings and at warm summer noontides, the aromatic odour of the earth and the moor plants is wafted into your room, and at all times the eye is met by the *good gigantic smile o' the brown old earth*, and looks out upon the great sentinel mountains which engirdle the horizon and are the cause of ceaseless wonder and admiration. A man may stand at his doorstep and, turning his back on the town, gaze on the lonely sea and mountains and the desolate seacliffs, and thus

imagine himself a thousand miles from the society of his fellows. Yet a swift step round, and there are a dozen ready to talk with him, and he sees the familiar clustered houses, the quay and the banks and offices, the hotels and churches. Here, indeed, is *rus in urbe*, if anyone care to seek it!

CHAPTER III

TROTTERNISH

"follow
Shadowlike, o'er hill and hollow,
And bend your fancy to my leading."

EMERSON.

THE peninsula of Trotternish, which forms the most northerly part of the island, has a backbone of lofty ridges which, beginning on the rising moorland just above Portree, runs on for sixteen miles till it terminates in Sgurr Mhor, beyond Staffin. On its eastern side this series of ridges presents a precipitous face, of which the most marked features are the cliffs and needles of Storr and the Quiraing. Below them is a deep valley, in which nestle many lochs, and on the other side of which rise lesser slopes, which on their seaward side are equally precipitous. These steep seaward cliffs, as we shall see, are sills, or sheets of lava, immensely thick, intruded between the upper and lower layers of the basalt plateaux, after they were laid down. The upper basalt sheets have been cut back to the ridge, and have left the intrusive sills in a long line from Portree to the Shiant Isles. But the western side of the ridge and backbone is gentler. Long grassy slopes, softer and rounder, run up to its summit, and on their vast surface, as seen from the far distance, the cloud shadows and reflected lights ceaselessly come and go. The loftiest part of the ridge is Storr, which rises in a sheer black precipice 2360 feet above the sea. Six miles to the north

Beinn Edra is 2000 feet high, but infinitely less imposing.

To circumambulate these ridges is a long and difficult task, for at least a third of the way, from Portree to Lealt, is by a rough and, at times, scarcely discoverable track. Beyond that the road begins, and sweeping round the end of the peninsula, passes Duntulm, Kilmuir, Uig, and Kingsburgh, and then returns to Portree. It may be done in two days; and if the weather is good, your limbs strong, and your heart light, it offers such panoramas of scenery and such a variety of interesting places, as will scarce be found elsewhere within the same distance.

Advancing up the valley from Portree by the side of a tinkling burn, you come first, after four miles' walking, to Loch Fada, and then, two miles farther on, to Loch Leathan, both stocked with brown trout, with which, at the right time, you may easily fill your basket. In front all the way is Storr, its black face tossed skywards, and facing it, on a high ridge, stand the many pinnacles of which the Old Man is the most prominent. It is a steep climb to the top of this green ridge, but once the summit is gained, you find yourself at what seems a giddy height, and among a series of ghostly pinnacles, broken and weather-worn, standing at various angles, and looking down into a dark ravine below the black precipices which tower grimly high overhead. The Old Man is a curious pillar, in shape like a huge elongated pear, its base cut into, its head 150 feet above you. Sitting down below it and facing the precipices, you are struck at first with the weird desolation of the place. The ravine below is full of shattered rocks fallen from the cliffs above; the hues of the rock, grey and black, are ghastly and repellent; an eerie wind sobs in its gullies; wisps of mist floating across its face give it an unearthly appearance, as its summit and bastions and shoulders loom out and then disappear. Here

is a scene for dark tragedies; here might lurk the fabulous creatures of the Celtic mythology; here might rise the altars of some horrid and ghastly faith propitiating the gloomy powers with human sacrifice.

But turning away from this desolation and looking seawards and down the valley, the sense of contrast is relieved by a scene of far-stretching beauty. The valley which has been traversed lies far below, green and inviting, and its lochs seem no larger than and are curiously like the blue spaces which mark them on the map. At its remote end lie Portree and the silvery waters of the bay. Over the eastern ridge in front is the sea, sparkling in the sunshine, and far beyond it on the remote horizon is Gareloch, dim and shadowy. Nearly opposite is Loch Torridon and its encircling mountains. Rona, with its broken succession of red rocks, and Raasay, with its purple hills, lie between the ridges and the mainland, and beyond them one gets a peep at Applecross and the mountains huddled above Loch Carron and Kyle-rhea. There is the narrow sound winding in beneath Ben Tianavaig, and then turning southwards to Broadford, where it is lost under the shadow of Scalpa. But there the rounded summits of the Red Hills attract you, dwarfing the other features of the landscape, and holding you with their spell. The sunlight gleams from their ruddy face, till they seem like glowing masses of light. Then to their right rise the dark Coolins, frowning at you over the silvery face of Portree Loch.

The vast precipice of Storr[1] is flanked on its southern side by a retreating wall of rock, ending in a jutting bastion. Beyond this bastion the ascent of the cliff may be made by climbing up a steep and narrow gully, from which you emerge on the grassy slopes and toil over their lawn-like surface, wind-worn and sheep-cropped, to the

[1] Storr is derived from Fiacaill storăch—a buck-tooth, the name being suggested by the pinnacles.

summit. Thence the view to south and east is much as it appears from the Old Man far below; but look westwards, and a huge expanse of rolling moorland, wandering sea-lochs, the Tables at Dunvegan, open sea, and the islands of the Outer Hebrides, meet the eye. By far the best time to see it is in the clear air of early spring, though the piercing winds from the north will cut you as with a razor. But that vast concourse of country with its diverse features, the far-spreading sea, and the long chain of purple islands stretching from Lewis to Barra, will enchant you. And, looking northwards, you will follow the line of this mighty backbone on which you are standing as it twists and curves until it ends in the remote distance. Below you are what seem black unfathomed deeps, giddy recesses, gullies filled with hardened snow, and, above the ghastly ravine, the pinnacles curiously foreshortened from this elevation. Sign of life you perceive none; in all that wide landscape you might be the sole survivor; silence and immensity fill the soul, and the still small voice speaks and holds you spellbound. Here, with none to witness, and amid this scene of solitary beauty, a demented lover shot himself thirty years ago, his body lying on this Pisgah height for days till a shepherd found it. You shudder as you think of it; just where you sit the tragedy may have been enacted!

On this lofty precipice a darker mystery, says tradition, was once enacted. One of the clergy of Skye wished to find out when Shrovetide should be kept; he was a magician, skilled in the black art, and the devil was at his service. Standing on the edge of the precipice, he called up his grisly servant, transformed him with a word into a horse, and leaped on his back. Off they set for Rome, the horse trying to get rid of his rider by propounding questions to him which involved his mentioning the name of the Deity in his answer. All in vain! Next morning Rome was reached; the Pope hurried

in—with a lady's slipper on one foot. He charged our Skye parson with his diabolical craft ; the cleric wagged an accusing finger at the tell-tale slipper, and (let us hope) brought a blush to the papal face. Roman augurs, when they met, says Juvenal, could hardly refrain from smiling ; Pope and cleric were their mediæval counterparts, and each resolved to keep the other's secret safely.

Sheriff Nicolson, the Skye poet, has said that "to ascend the Storr and follow the mountain ridge the whole way till you come to the highroad near the Quiraing, is no doubt one of the grandest promenades in Skye, commanding wide views in all directions." Sceptics say he never did follow it himself, but he who chooses to do so, instead of descending again to the valley and toiling through its bogs, will be amply satisfied. You go up and down as you follow the line of the ridges, dipping seven times into as many hollows before you come to Beinn Edra, where you come down upon the road, tired but delighted. But if you descend from Storr you may count for the next four miles on a rough walk, or rather a succession of leaps, over the shaggy moorland with its bogs and streams at every step, until the road at Lealt is reached. But you pass the long line of rolling ridges, here dipping down, there shooting upwards into peaks and sgurrs. At Lealt you are once more among the abodes of men, and follow a succession of tiny townships and strips of cultivated land. There, too, is one of the too few industries of the island—the diatomite works at Cuithir, of which more presently. The road follows the edge of the cliff, and from it one looks down to the glittering sea, and across it to the long chain of mountains on the mainland. Then at Loch Mealt, which runs up close to the cliff's edge, the road takes a turn inland till it reaches the beautiful blue bay of Staffin and the shattered front of the Quiraing.

Here, in stormy weather, the wild rollers of the

Minch break in fury on the shore, and all landing or embarking is impossible. But on a still day the water is like glass, and stretches its radiant surface for miles before you. The grassy mounds of Staffin Island, and, a little farther north, Eilean Altavaig, with its precipitous sides, are mirrored in the blue depths, while on the remote horizon are seen the tiny Shiant Isles, and beyond them the dim shadows of the coast-line of Lewis. Eastwards, over the gleaming sea, rise the mountains of Ross-shire, and looking down on the bay are the black cliffs of the Quiraing and the northern summits of the ridge. It is a magnificent bit of varied colour and mingled lights, and all around the bay are scattered crofters' huts and patches of cornland, which add a touch of human interest to nature's beauty. Or, if you look landwards from the bay, you see the wide sweep of its shores, so fertile and inviting, guarded by the vast amphitheatre of basaltic rock and green talus slopes, rising tier above tier to a height of 1800 feet to where the long line of the ridge cuts the blue sky. The whole scene dazzles, for not only does the water gleam and sparkle, but the grey rock itself seems to reflect the rays of the sun as if it were composed of millions of precious stones. You see, too, on the terraces, the pinnacles and shattered walls of rock and detached bastions which make the Quiraing so wonderful. Dark shadows fill the ravines and hollows, but they only make the lights by contrast more intense and more dazzling.

A rough path breaks off the main road, and by clambering over it the traveller is brought up the green talus slopes and among the bewildering series of precipices and pinnacles and hollows of these famous cliffs. Great slices of rock, fissured and cracked, stand apart from the main precipice behind, and through these fissures you look out upon the bay and its shores far below, where the houses are dwarfed to insignificance. These detached masses and the many airy pinnacles of every conceivable

form have the most weird and fantastic appearance, especially if wisps of summer mist glide through and among them. You feel yourself surrounded by a crowd of mute figures, which seem as if they would fain whisper to you the secret of the ages, and you understand why folk-belief at all times and in every part of the world has described such rocks as these as petrified giants or men. Nay, you begin to understand why animism should have arisen, and why men should have attributed spirits like their own, or even greater than their own, to rocks and precipices and every other object of nature, and should, at last, have been led to fall down and worship them.

The highest of all the pinnacles is the Needle Rock, a spiry, airy column, 120 feet high. From its base you gaze out upon the beauties of the landscape. Far below, the grassy slopes dip down to the rich cultivated ground which is lapped by the waters of the bay. The sea, jewelled with green or rocky islets, stretches in a wide expanse over to the mainland, of which a glimpse is seen different from that viewed from the Old Man of Storr. The peaks of Ross-shire, the hills of Gareloch, stand mistily beyond the retreating shore line. But from this giddy height it is the sea which attracts you most—the sea which gleams and sparkles in the sunshine, and lies like a vast plain, in successive bands of light and colour, between the nearer and the more distant shores. What a vision of infinite distance it suggests to the mind when it is seen from this lofty height, and amid these weird rock forms, with the awful silence wrapping it around! Its blithe beauty fills the heart with a hundred joyful thoughts, and a hundred memories of happy days of which only the recollection remains. Like the awe which arises as we gaze on great mountain masses, the joy which comes from the smiling ocean raises in us emotions which we can scarcely understand and which haunt us for days to

come. Of course, mountain and sea are only different forms of matter, but yet they always suggest more than mere matter can account for, and the eye which looks upon them at once leads the mind from what is seen to think of the splendour of the unseen reflected from them, and pulsing forth in waves to arouse in it *thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.* How often must this wild workshop of the Titans, side by side as it were with the peaceful beauty of the far-spreading sea and dim blue mountains on the horizon, have roused such thoughts in the many pilgrims who have come to this lonely shrine of Mother Nature!

What alone has the right to the name Quiraing is the extraordinary hollow with its table rock. It may be entered by a narrow rock-strewn crevice, but its vastness is best seen from some coign of vantage overhead. Imagine a huge cup covered with grass and surrounded at its edge by broken crags and boulders. At the bottom of the cup lies a huge oblong mass of rock, 300 feet long, with a flat top, clothed with the greenest of turf, a contrast to its craggy sides. This is the Table Rock, which still awaits its guests. Tradition says that in this huge hidden hollow sheep used to be concealed in times of danger. Here they found safety and green pastures, and could easily be defended by their owners against the raiders, if ever they discovered this marvellous hiding-place.

Whoever visits the Quiraing and remembers Wordsworth's famous description of the mountain forms suddenly seen through the rising mist, will think of them there, especially if he is fortunate enough to see these battlements and crags, pinnacles and spires, with the mist floating round them till it is driven off by the breeze and the sun shines clear on the broken rocks. It may well be quoted here:

"Oh! 'twas an unimaginable sight!
Clouds, mists, streams, watery rocks, and emerald turf,

Clouds of all tincture, rocks, and sapphire sky,
Confused, commingled, mutually inflamed,
Molten together, and composing thus,
Each lost in each, that marvellous array
Of temple, palace, citadel, and huge
Fantastic pomp of structure without name,
In fleecy folds voluminous, enwrapped."[1]

In truth, Wordsworth is the poet to read when you are in Skye. You appreciate him the better on account of all that lies around you, and you understand that and its lessons the more as they are interpreted by the poet's vision. I do not know that Wordsworth ever was in Skye, but he, more than any other poet, has the key to the secret of its hills and moors and engirdling seas.

From Staffin and the Quiraing the road continues to follow the coast-line, passing under the curious nose-like headlands of Sgurr Mohr—the extremity of the vast backbone. Long slopes and deep gullies run down from the ridge seawards, covered with rich pasture, and the road dips and rises as it crosses the hollows and higher banks. At one point the whole extent of the ridge is seen—a long line of broken summits towering high in air, melting in the far distance into softer outlines, but most prominent of all are the fierce crags of Storr, which not even the power of distance can soften. Then, bending westwards a mile or two to the south of the extreme northern points of Skye—Rudha na h-Aiseig and the peninsula of Rudha Hunish—the road crosses a wide moorland in which lies the township of Kilmaluaig, until it touches the sea once more on the west by the ruined towers of Duntulm.

"Ged tha thu'n diugh 'a d'aibheas fhuar,
Bha thu uair 'a d'aros righ,"[2]

may well be applied to the few remaining walls of this ancient house. For centuries it was the chief

[1] The passage occurs in canto second of the *Excursion*.

[2] Though thou art to-day a ruin cold,
Thou wert once the dwelling of a king.

seat of the Macdonalds of the Isles, and here their chiefs reigned as kings, and went forth to contest the sovereignty with the rival kings of Scotland. In earlier times a dun stood here, called Dun Dhaibidh or David, after a Viking who had seized it from the Celts. On its site Duntulm was erected. The castle itself stands on a lofty mound, the summit of a cliff down which its windows looked sheer into the sea. Seawards, it was unapproachable, and from the land side could scarcely have been less so, for the mound was protected by outlying walls, and these again by ditches. Secure in this northern fastness, the kings of the Isles could well taunt all their foes, and, summoning their followers, sally forth by sea or land to battle and victory.

The line of the foundation wall shows what an extent of building once comprised this lordly seat, but now only the mouldering gables of what has the appearance of a chapel with some dark vaults beneath, the remains of a wall pierced by windows on the cliff's edge, and two isolated columns, broken and ruinous,—the last remnants of the ancient keep, —are all that remain to tell the tale of its quondam grandeur. Carved and inscribed stones once adorned the tower, but these have all perished. Seen from the foot of the mound, these ruins stand sheer against the sky. Far below, the sea breaks on the iron cliff, a hummocky island lies in the little bay, the blue waters of the Minch stretch outward until they meet the purple hills of Harris lying in an unbroken line on the horizon. Such was the scene which met the eyes of the chief and his house as they gazed from the battlements, or looked down with pride upon their galleys moored in the bay below them.[1] Until far on in the eighteenth century this "stark strength" was the home of the chief,

[1] A deep groove in the rocks at the edge of the bay is said to have been made by the keel of the chief's galley when it was drawn up on the shore.

and then it was suddenly deserted and left in isolation to moulder and decay. A nursemaid playing with a child of the house at one of the windows overlooking the grim depths below, let it fall into the sea, where, crushed and lifeless, its body was discovered. This tragic occurrence made the family leave the castle for ever, but not before the wretched woman (as tradition avers) had been set adrift in a boat full of holes to meet a ghastly fate. But not so long ago there was living an aged woman who had spoken in her childhood to another woman, who in her youth had been a servant in the castle when the last ball was given there, and when a brilliant company had made the ancient walls resound with the echoes of their mirth and dancing. One cannot but regret that this ancient house, hanging, like Tantallon and Dunnottar, above the sea, was not preserved to be the roof-tree of the Macdonalds, as Dunvegan is of the MacLeods. Of the many scenes these crumbling walls have witnessed history records only a few. As we shall see, King James v. visited Duntulm and admired its strength and position. Only a few years later, the chief, Donald Gorme, put his treacherous kinsman, Hugh Macghilleasbuig, to a fearful end in the Duntulm dungeon. Hugh was as cruel and vicious as he was strong. A song, composed by the sisters of some of his own male relations whom he had put to death, asks indignantly why his foster-nurse did not crush him in her arms while he was yet a baby. At last, having plotted against Donald Gorme, the detested Hugh was captured and brought to Duntulm, where he was kept starving for some time. By an aggravated cruelty, salt meat was lowered to him. He devoured it greedily, but soon a raging thirst consumed him. None would give him water, and the poor wretch, victim of his own evil life, suffered the most awful agonies, gnawing a pewter dish to pieces, says tradition, before he died.

Some years after, Donald Gorme took an aversion

to his wife, a sister of Rory Mor MacLeod, lord of Dunvegan. The truth was that he had fallen in love with a daughter of Mackenzie of Kintail, and resolved to be rid of his lawful wife. The poor lady had the misfortune to have lost an eye, and Donald the Grim added insult to her injuries, by mounting her on a one-eyed grey horse, led by a one-eyed boy, and followed by a one-eyed dog, when he drove her from Duntulm. Rory Mor was not the man to sit still under an insult of this kind, and when his sister arrived at Dunvegan with her pitiful cavalcade and her story of wrong, he began the work of revenge. Collecting his men, he carried fire and sword through Trotternish, leaving many a smoking hamlet and dead Macdonald behind him. Donald Gorme replied by invading MacLeod's lands in Harris; Rory Mor at once went to Donald's territories in Uist. So the feud went on, until the respective clans had had their fill of fighting, or at least until the interference of the Government brought about a reconciliation.

The farm of Duntulm beyond the mound is probably the farm which was once held by the hereditary doctor of the chief—the eldest son in the family being invariably educated at his expense for that profession. On Ru Meanish, under the shadow of the castle walls, was the "Hill of Pleas," where the chief sat and administered justice, and there, doubtless, many a trembling wretch has heard his doom pronounced and been led off at once to grace the gallows. An old print of the castle, dating about 1750, shows the keep still intact, with a pinnacled tower, and the descriptive account attached to it tells the gruesome tale that near by the castle an incestuous pair (a brother and sister) were buried alive, by order of the chief. When such powers were in his hands, we cannot doubt that, as the descriptive account says, "to the respect paid to the decisions delivered from the summit of the Hill of Pleas may in some measure be attributed the

strict obedience of a fierce and military race to their chieftain."

Between Duntulm and Kilmuir the road keeps close to the shore of Score Bay and the great cliffs with their clustered pillars and columns and deep caves which bound it. For miles to come it will pass through romantic and historic ground, beginning two miles from Duntulm with the ancient burial-ground of Kilmuir, the church of St. Mary, every vestige of which has gone. To the lover of the romantic, few places in this solitary land could give greater pleasure. It is the Reileag Mhoir Chlonin Donuill, the burial-place of the Macdonalds of the Isles, and here lies the dust of her whose name is best known of all her clan, Flora Macdonald, "a name that will be mentioned in history, and, if courage and fidelity are virtues, mentioned with honour." She died at Peinduin, some miles to the south, in 1790, and now, her shroud one of the sheets in which the Prince slept at Kingsburgh, she rests in this churchyard perched high on the windy seaboard and looking out upon a glorious landscape. A great Iona cross and a massive slab of granite cover her mortal remains, and on the latter is inscribed:

FLORA MACDONALD,
Born at Milton, South Uist, 1722.
Died at Kingsburgh, Skye, March 1790.

This white cross is visible far out to sea, but it is exposed to the fury of the wild winter storms, and is stayed up by a great bar of iron. An earlier cross was blown down and broken to pieces.[1]

[1] There is another memorial of Flora Macdonald in St. Columba's (Episcopal) Church at Portree, in the shape of a stained window and a brass. The subject of the window is Esther delivering her countrymen. The first light shows Esther receiving the news of the king's edict; the centre light her appeal to the king; that on the right the king with Esther receiving Mordecai. In the ornamental lights above are figures of angels, the Macdonald arms, and the words from Esther iv.

The view from this ancient place is grand and beautiful. In front the grassy land slopes down abruptly to the basaltic cliffs which send out huge escarpments into the sea, greatest of which is Ru Bornaskitaig on the left with its rocky pillar, and, carved into its heart, Uamh Oir, the Cave of Gold. From Rudha Hunish, the northern point of Skye, and Duntulm, whose grey ruins are visible from the churchyard gate, the eye follows a wide, winding, semicircular belt of gleaming sea. Beyond it is the massive black line of the Vaternish cliffs bounding Loch Snizort, and the purple hills of Benbecula, North Uist, and Harris. North of Harris lies part of the flat land of Lewis, separated from it by the long Loch Seaforth. Nearer Skye are numerous rocky islets, chief of them Fladdahuan—Fladda of the Ocean, the site of a chapel dedicated to St. Columba, to the ruined altar of which fishermen came to bathe the famous stone which brought them a favourable wind. Everything in Skye is so ancient, so romantic, that it will surprise nobody to learn that this island, or, as some say, Holm Island to the north of Portree, was the famed Tir na h' Oige, the Celtic land of youth and faery, *where*

16, "If I perish, I perish." The words on the brass are as follows:—"To the glory of God and in memory of Flora Macdonald, daughter of Ranald the son of Angus Macdonald the younger, Milton, South Uist. She was born in 1722, and was married November 6th, 1750, at Flodigarry, Isle of Skye, to Allan VII. in descent of the Kingsburgh Macdonalds, Captain, 34th Royal Highland Emigrant Regiment. Who served with distinction through the American War of Independence. She died March 5th, 1790, and was buried at Kilmuir, Isle of Skye. She effected the escape of Prince Charles Edward from South Uist after the battle of Culloden in 1746; and in 1779, when returning from America on board a ship attacked by a French privateer, encouraged the sailors to make a spirited and successful resistance, thus risking her life for both the Houses of Stuart and Hanover. This window was dedicated to the memory of Flora Macdonald in the year of our Lord 1896 by one of her great grandchildren, Fanny Charlotte, widow of Lieutenant-Colonel R. E. Henry, and daughter of Captain James Murray Macdonald, grandson of Flora Macdonald."

falls not hail, nor rain, nor any snow.[1] The days passed for the dwellers on this happy isle like a beautiful dream; thither Oisin was sent for a time to prevent the tongue of slander from wagging too freely, for his mother had been transformed into a deer by fairy enchantments. Behind the churchyard lies a hollow tract of land, backed by some of the Trotternish ridges—Sgurr Mor and Meall na Suiramach.

The lights and shadows are ever changing on sea and mountains as the face of the sky varies. But whether it smile or frown, it cannot make this wide prospect other than strangely beautiful and fascinating. And she whose dust lies at our feet brought her Prince across these miles of sea from far Benbecula to Vaternish Point, and then down Loch Snizort to Lady Margaret Macdonald's house at Monkstadt. Peace to her brave and dauntless spirit! There are many nameless graves and ruined vaults and some beautifully incised ancient slabs in this churchyard, but this great granite cross absorbs all our interest. Long may it stand to mark this honoured dust, and to watch the leaping waves and the purple mountains in the far distance!

Lying between the sea and the Trotternish ridges, and stretching for six miles southward towards Uig, lies the plain of Kilmuir. It is the most fertile part of the island, and was once known as the granary of Skye or of the Macdonalds of the Isles.[2] No wonder

[1] An excellent instance of the manner in which the Irish Feinne legends have been adapted to Highland localities. Much fairy glamour would be needed to see in Fladdahuan or in Holm Island, tiny islands both, the Land of Immortal Youth! As to Oisin, his name is derived from the tuft of fur which grew on his temple, where his mother's tongue had touched him. Oisin would not eat venison, and, being asked the reason, he answered, "When everyone picks his mother's shank-bone, I will pick my own mother's slender shank-bone." Is the legend a dim memory of totemistic customs and restrictions?

[2] The MacLeods, perhaps a little envious of this fair land, called it "Duthaich nam stapag," the country of the stappacks

that many of the Macdonald and MacLeod feuds were waged for the possession of this fertile country. In 1598 the Scottish crown let Kilmuir to a lowland company, but the company could not hold its own against the contending clans, and was ruined. In 1772 the traveller Pennant speaks of its heavy crops and of its fields "laughing with corn." Barley, a crop far to seek in Skye now, was grown as well as oats, and that often without manure for so long a period as twenty years. In the midst of this plain lay a shallow loch called Loch Columcille, with an island on which was a large monastic establishment. The loch was one and one-eighth mile long, but had gradually become a marsh before the first draining operations took place in 1715. These were abandoned, to be again attempted in 1763, when water filled the bed of the loch once more. Finally, in 1824, after five years' labour and an expenditure of ten thousand pounds, the task was accomplished.

This verdant plain lies like a cup between the basaltic ridge — a great wall of broken rock and green talus slopes, and a long line of gently rising ground from which great cliffs overhang the sea. At its northern end it is open, but towards the south it is shut in by the heights of Skudiburg and Idrigill, at the farther side of which Uig lies hidden. Half-way down the ridge which forms the seaboard is Monkstadt — a grey farmhouse with a few sparse trees, — and beyond the ridge is another glimpse of the sea and Vaternish and the outer isles. The loch basin is crossed at right angles to each other by a series of narrow drains and wider canals, crowded with tall equisetum and other marsh plants. It is the home of many wild-fowl — you may perhaps scare a wild-duck from her eggs or startle the water-hen's brood

(meal and water). Macdonald wit responded by calling Duirinish "Duthaich nam mogais," the country of the footless stockings.

darting among the plants on the surface of the canals.

To inspect the ruins of the monastery one must leave the highroad and descend into the plain for a mile and a quarter. The island on which they stand could never have risen high above the water. It is nearly three acres in extent, and its whole surface is covered with rough blocks of grey lichen-covered stones—remains of the monastic cells. There are a few traces of buildings, which may be of any age, so old do they appear, so covered with moss, as well as of a cashel or protecting wall.[1] On what was once the western shore of the loch are traces of other buildings, and immediately above, on the height overlooking the sea, is Carn Liath—an ancient burial-mound. Ascending to it one gazes down on the water which fills the air with its noises, and across it to the dark front of the Vaternish cliffs and their verdant tops stretching away to the heart of the peninsula. Southwards down the coast are the great cliffs at Uig, and Dun Skudiburg with its "stack" rising from the sea below. In front are the rocky Ascrib Isles, and on the horizon the chain of the Outer Hebrides. At either end of the plain and on the opposite side below the basalt ridges there are abundant crofts with their fertile patches of cornland smiling in the sunshine. But the place where the loch was seems a deserted solitude, dotted only with rough Highland cattle, and rendered still more solitary by the ruined heaps of stone. Tadmor in the wilderness could scarce seem more desolate. The matin bell rings no longer; the monks no more go forth to pray or to work; time and change have made a solitude and called it peace. The sea is moaning far below, the ruins of an ancient Christianity are unspeakably sad; did Columba and his monks labour only for this? But a lark is carolling high in air, it suggests more cheerful thoughts, and one remembers that Columba's work

[1] For details of these ruins, see p. 281.

lives on in the hearts of men, it did not fail when the monastery became a ruin.

From any point in the plain, or from the road itself, Monkstadt house is seen just below the top of the ridge which looks down on Prince Charles's landing-place. This plain stone house, retired and solitary, seems always to be brooding over the scenes that have happened in it, as other houses give the impression of their mysteriously awaiting some event which will at once cause them to leap into fame. And one remembers that eventful day in the history of this house: Flora Macdonald seeking help at its door, Lady Margaret and Kingsburgh bustling to and fro, yet trying to conceal their tremors from the Hanoverian officer, the arrangements hurriedly made, and, probably calmest of all, the hunted Fugitive, tossing pebbles as he sat on the beach below out of sight. From Monkstadt the little party—Charles as Betty Burke—set out for Kingsburgh, farther to the south, and the house of Monkstadt was left once more to its solitude.

Just before the road begins to dip down and double upon itself to Uig Bay, it is worth while leaving it again by the path which leads to Dun Skudiburg—an ancient fort perched on a high eminence above the sea. The landward side of this height is steep and rocky. It is crowned by the ruins of the fort—an ancient Celtic place of defence which must have been well-nigh impregnable. On the seaward side between the fort and the cliff's edge is a level piece of greensward completely surrounded by the remains of a wall. The enemy who mounted the cliff had to face the prospect of being hurled backwards down that giddy height when he attempted to scale the wall. The view seawards is much the same as from Carn Liath, but to the left are great cliffs sheltering a little bay, and Idrigil Point, beyond which lies the mouth of Uig Bay itself. It is a lonely spot. Far below, rising upwards to about a fourth of the cliff's height, is the

Stack of Skudiburg—a great pinnacle of basalt, hoary with lichens. Near it are basaltic rocks, black and shattered, looking like some ruined castle, and close by them is a reef of dwarf prismatic columns of the same rock. Down the coast, below Monkstadt, is Prince Charles's Point—a little spit of land jutting outwards, to which the bonny boat came over the sea to Skye one hundred and fifty-seven years ago. The combination of nature's ruins and man's deserted works, the rolling sea and the cliffs and the air of unrecorded history which broods around, almost oppresses the lonely pilgrim. As he gazes down into the depths, he would not be surprised to see a mermaid rise from the waves and lament for her long dead Celtic lover who watched her from the fort on the height, or some strange sea-monster —creature of the vivid Celtic imagination—put its cruel face out of the waves and bellow in baffled fury. The truth is that all such solitary places in Skye—the cliffs seldom trodden by mortal foot and against which the sea is always dashing, and the ruins of long ago which crown so many of them, inspire some minds with a fearful joy—the joy at so much wild beauty, the catching mysterious fear of the unseen forms which must (you feel it) haunt these windswept heights. Unhealthy imagination! cries sober sense. So be it, but something of that is necessary if one would taste to the full the charm of the Western Isles, and of Eilean a Cheo in particular. But the populous village of Uig will soon chase away all unhealthy imaginings as we pass through it.

Rounding the high tors of Idrigil, and running down a steep zigzag, the road brings one suddenly in full view of Uig Bay and village far below, with its many crofts, pretty cottages with hedges and gardens, churches, and hotel. The bay is surrounded by an amphitheatre of steep green slopes, ending at either side in high basaltic cliffs. At the upper or northern end of the bay these slopes are less steep

and are crowded with fertile crofts divided from each other by walls of turf. Towards the centre, two woodland glens, cut into the slopes as with a giant's knife, converge from opposite directions, and through them flow the waters of the Rha and the Conon. I know no prettier glens in Skye—the wide silvery burns flowing down under the trees which crowd their banks and the rocky or green sides of the glens, fringed with all kinds of ferns and wild-flowers, and haunted by furred and feathered creatures innumerable. One might spend a whole summer-tide listening to the chorus of the birds echoing through the perfumed air, and wandering daily up these glens to their higher recesses among the ridges far away, where the waters dash over precipitous rocks or murmur through secret dells.

The road winds down to nearly the sea-level, and crosses these burns between the sea and the green slopes fringed with woodland. Then it mounts again for 300 feet along the face of the green slopes gashed with many a torrent bed, and from this point the whole extent of the bay is spread out before the eye—the frowning headlands, the grassy precipices, enclosing the dark glens and the bright patches of arable land and the tiny cottages. Far below, the sea swings and heaves continually. Between the bay and the massive line of the Vaternish cliffs opposite are the rocky Ascrib Isles, and far across the Little Minch the cones of Harris. The exquisite beauty of the scene when dazzling sunlight pours down upon it and sea and land seem some strange vision of tremulous beauty, can only be imagined. To the left the upper waters of Loch Snizort (Loch Greshornish) are visible running far inland, and away beyond the rolling moors which enclose them Macleod's Tables stand out against the sky. Then the road dips down again southwards, and the bay and its surroundings are lost to sight. After some miles of bare moorland it comes upon a wilder glen. Through the broken heath-covered

surface emerge great bosses of grey basalt, mounting up into curiously shaped high tors. At one place these basaltic bosses confine the road to a narrow lane, but mostly the land is more open and is crossed by rushing burns which have cut deep chasms in their rocky bed. One of these comes down from Glen Hinnisdal—a beautiful winding glen running far up into the recesses of the Trotternish ridges. Not far from this point lies Prince Charles's Well, a little spring beyond the burn on the right of the road, where the Prince satisfied his thirst as he journeyed down to Kingsburgh, and where the belated Jacobite will drink a cup of its fair water to his memory.

Below the ridge which hides the waters of Loch Snizort lie at the sea's edge the ruins of Caisteal Uisdean,[1] and three miles farther south Kingsburgh house with its woods and fields. Close by stood the older house where Flora Macdonald lived, and where the Prince and, at a later time, Dr. Johnson and Boswell slept.[2] The loch itself comes into view farther on—a great stretch of gleaming water. Beyond its mouth the outer islands are seen once more. Opposite are the cliffs of its western shore and Lyndale Point, hiding the entrance to Loch Greshornish. At its head it is divided into three by the peninsulas of the Aird—a fertile tongue of land crowded with crofts, and of Skerinish with its curious tors. The loch lies in a vast cup, its shores stretching to the far distance, diversified by dark moorland and cultivated fields and patches of woodland, over which the shifting lights and shadows come and go. On the remote horizon are the splintered Coolins (looking like a vast saw), Glamaig, and the Red Hills beyond the long line of Fingal's Seat, with its cairn looking down upon Portree. It is a wide and various landscape, made happier in summer with the song of the birds and the sight of innumerable wildflowers. Towards the head of the

[1] See p. 271. [2] See Chap. XVIII.

loch nestles the village of Snizort, homelike and cheerful. Beyond you, as you leave it behind, lies the loch, its shore fringed with miles of cultivated land lying snugly beneath the shaggy moorland topped with a long line of basaltic tors. To the left is Glen Haultin — a hollow amid a maze of roughly rounded hills, one of which is seen to be the green back of the precipitous Storr. After traversing a few miles more, the top of the ridge at Drumuie is reached. From it you say good-bye to Harris, whose mountains have been visible all the way down the western side of the peninsula. In front lies Portree above its bay, and surrounded by its successive lines of hills and mountains, and having reached it your pilgrimage is over.

It is a long journey which has been accomplished when the town once more comes into sight, and whoever performs it will feel as if he had been travelling for unknown ages through a shaggy land, among great cliffs, and purple moorlands, sunlit spaces and leaping seas, with but his thoughts to bear him company. And yet he will have been conscious of a glad music sounding in his ears—the music of the voice of nature, the flute-notes of the pipes of Pan!

CHAPTER IV

VATERNISH AND THE GREAT NORTH ROAD

"Afoot and light-hearted I take to the open road,
Healthy, free, the world before me,
The long brown path before me leading wherever I choose."

WALT WHITMAN.

WHAT may be called the Great North Road of Skye begins in distant Ardvasar in the south, passes to Isle Ornsay, and then over the moors and far away to Broadford. From there it plunges into the deep recesses of the Red Hills, winds by lonely sea-lochs to Sligachan beneath the dark shadow of the mighty Sgurr-nan-Gillean, and so on for nine lonely miles to Portree. Leaving Portree it strikes northward, and, after climbing to the top of the ridge at Drumuie, descends again into the valley towards Loch Snizort. Near there, one arm of it branches off to Uig and Staffin; the other stretches westwards to Fairy Bridge, where it divides again, one sub-branch leading to Vaternish, the other to Dunvegan. This sub-branch, at about two miles from Dunvegan, is once more divided, one part turning off at a right angle, and following the shores of Loch Bracadale and Loch Harport, crosses Skye to Sligachan, where it meets the original Great North Road once more.

We shall follow the section of this road from Portree to Vaternish. The pleasure of the highway, which to some may be merely monotonous, will depend much on the weather. I have travelled across it when the whole atmosphere seemed a mere

blinding sheet of water, and, over the undulating moorland and down the sides of the hills, the wind swept unceasingly and lashed itself into fury. You feel yourself getting colder and colder and wetter and wetter in spite of oilskin and sou'-wester and as many greatcoats as an old-clo' man might be conceived to wear. But the very fury of the elements, the pitiless sting of raindrops or hailstones on the face, hold you in a kind of mesmeric stupor, and there is a painful pleasure in listening to the unwonted atmospheric noises or watching the water rushing in rich brown foaming masses along every river course and down a hundred torrent beds. To most people all this will sound foolish, and they will suppose this road the abomination of desolation. But there are days when it shows to better advantage, when the mysterious moorland and the winding sea-lochs by which it wanders, and the glimpses of distant islands and glimmering horizons, enchant the wayfarer. There are cloudless summer days and soft grey autumnal days revealing most unexpected combinations of light and shadow, when this road would have charmed Hazlitt or Stevenson—these lovers of out of doors, into penning some of their finest descriptive passages.

From the ridge at Drumuie you look back over leagues of country — moorland valleys, glittering lochs, the tremendous mountain-masses of Skye, the shadowy hills of far-off Ross-shire. You cross the ridge, and on the hillside at your right are the ruins of an ancient dun. Far westwards, peeping over a distant ridge, are MacLeod's Tables, and, swelling away to the ridge, a new aspect of the moorland. In the valley you see Loch Snizort winding from far inland away out into the open sea, beyond which lies Harris with its conical hills. If you are fortunate enough to see the sun setting behind those purple cones, you will never forget what you have seen—billowy waves of colour, lavish fields of gold, sea and land transmuted into the

landscape of faery, and such a longing in your heart for the mystic unknown and unseen as to bring the tears to your eyes.

A flat valley, unsheltered from the fierce winds of winter, lies below the ridge, and is watered by the winding Snizort river (famous for salmon) and its tributaries. At its mouth, where it joins the loch, here as narrow as the river itself, is the island of St. Columba, with its ancient graveyard and ruined churches. Near by, on the right of the road, is an isolated boulder on which the saint is said to have stood and preached the gospel to the heathen Celts. From this point and for several miles farther, the road is, for Skye, a populous one, with crofters' huts and patches of cornland edging it to right and left. Just beyond the bridge at the loch's head is Skeabost, and here is to be seen a sight almost unique for Skye — a beech hedge with woodlands beyond it running by the roadside for a mile and a half. Appearing suddenly after the naked landscape and the waste moor strewn with boulders, it looks as if a bit of England had been transferred to these moorland solitudes. So accurately is it cut that it undulates and winds with every winding and dip of the road, suggesting a pair of long sinuous green serpents, like the monsters of the romantic Celtic folk-tales. In winter it keeps its russet-brown leaves when all the trees around are bare, and as it catches the hues of the fiery winter sunsets it blazes like burnished bronze. In spring the change from brown to a delicate green is gradual. First one notes the light greenish-white tint dawning amid the russet; then the mingling of green and brown; the fading of the brown as the old leaves fall off, until the long winding road is encompassed with walls of emerald. Now the road emerges on the open moorland once more. Below is Loch Snizort; on its northern shore, beyond where the road dips into a curious cup-like valley at Tayinlone, lies Kingsburgh in a bit of woodland, and there, you

remember with a thrill, the Wanderer rested and found a kindly welcome.

A mile beyond this point are the gates of Lyndale, which lies hidden in the recesses of a wood down by the sea, and there a daughter of the ancient house of the Lords of the Isles has made her home. From this point Loch Snizort is seen widening out beyond the cliffs of Uig and the headlands of Vaternish, and enclasping midway between these shores the rocky Ascrib Islands, from whose steep cliffs you may look sheer down into six fathoms of water, clear as glass under the summer sky, and watch the fish swimming amongst the sea forests far below. If the day is clear, this is one of the best points from which to view the hills of Harris. The sea is calm and reflects the rich blue of the sky in a hundred varying belts of shimmering light. Like dazzling gems are the rocky islets far out at the mouth of the loch, while the soft haze on the distant hills beyond the sea invites you to explore their mysteries. For there is always something mysterious and inviting in this road which at every step carries you farther westward. The charm of the Western Isles beckons you onwards like the romantic magic of early Celtic poetry. Your thoughts continually run on summer seas, and rocky islets, and hills of purple heather. Was it this that impelled Columba and his monks to seek a lonelier and yet lonelier isle to fix their home? We feel, with them, that unknown magic isles lie before us, under a fairer sky.

> "Yet who would stop, or fear to advance,
> Though home or shelter he had none,
> With such a sky to lead him on."

The road is now crossing the promontory which divides the upper waters of Loch Snizort—Loch Greshornish and Loch Snizort Beag—from each other, and by and by it drops down close to the shore of the former. At its head lies the township of

Edinbane, with its patches of corn and potatoes chequering the hillside with a pattern of irregular squares and oblongs of varied hues. Beyond this the road mounts higher and higher until you think it will never stop ascending. You pause to look behind. The steep grassy slopes of the hither side of the ridgy backbone which runs up the peninsula of Trotternish are seen in the distance, and, unless the sky is black with tempests, "shadows dark and sunlight sheen" always rest on their surface and in their hollows, as if they had some particular gift of catching the changing face of the sky. In the opposite direction the Coolins, purple and rugged, seem suspended in the air beyond the near ridge of the moor, and the steep escarpment of Talisker Head rises above the gleam of water which you know to be Loch Bracadale. Then you descend a long and easy slope (joy of the bicyclist) to Fairy Bridge, where the road branches off to Dunvegan and to Vaternish.

After following the Vaternish road for a mile or two through a rough moorland bounded by low-lying slopes, you come opposite to what is called in old antiquarian books the "Temple of Anaitis." The mind flashes to the gorgeous East, to the distant past, when *moonèd Ashtaroth, heaven's queen and mother both*, was worshipped with strange and mystic rites. What has the divine Anaitis of Syria to do with the shaggy Isle of Skye? Thereby hangs a tale. But let us first explore the ruins. The moor and a burn must be crossed, and the steep bank of the burn ascended, when you find yourself on a long tongue of land. The burn you have just crossed, and another on the farther side of the peninsula in a deep gorge, whose presence is quite unexpected till you are close to its edge, meet at the point of the tongue and then flow merrily down to the sea. These two burns make this peninsula well-nigh impregnable, for though the side of the burn on the right is not steep it is easily defensible,

while the gorge on the left is 150 feet deep, with precipitous and narrow sides slightly clad with birch and hazel. A wall connecting the two valleys shows that this has once been a stronghold in the far-off days, when the heather was so often dyed a deeper purple with the blood of the clansmen. But the gorge fascinates one most of all. It is about half a mile in length, but you could easily throw a stone from one side to the other. Far below, the burn rushes along in its rocky boulder-strewn bed; the sides of the gorge are basaltic, with here and there a dyke cutting them from top to bottom; and just opposite a waterfall dashes down in four successive leaps.

The stones which formed the defence of the neck of the peninsula are scattered about; here and there piled on each other, as they were by their first builders. Outside this again are the traces of an earthen dyke, as the first line of defence. Near what was the gate of the stone wall, on the outside, the old writers saw the remains of two houses, one on either side of the entrance. Inside the wall, stones are scattered about in all directions; but, beyond the foundations of some beehive cells and possibly of a fort, they give little indication of their primitive purpose. There can be little doubt that this natural strength was occupied by a dun or broch similar to those found in every part of Skye. But when the advent of the Norsemen was no longer feared, it seems to have passed to, or its stones to have been used for, a more peaceful object, as the Gaelic name Tempul-na-Annait suggests.

The word *annoit* occurs in Irish Gaelic as signifying the church in which the patron saint was educated, or within whose walls his sacred relics were treasured, and this distinction naturally gave it a first rank among all the churches of the district.[1] This name, with various combinations,

[1] See *Senchus Mor*, iii. 65, 75.

THE TEMPLE OF ANAITIS

occurs frequently in Celtic regions. At Calligray, Harris, is an ancient ruin called, like the Vaternish ruin, Tempul-na-h-Annait (the Annait Church); Tobar-na-h-Annait (the well of the Annait) is found in Strath; there is Annatburn in Perthshire, and Annait in Appin. All these signify that a church of the kind mentioned stood where the name remains with a long-forgotten signification. Our Tempul-na-Annait was thus a church, perhaps a monastic establishment, built on the site of the earlier fort; the monks taking advantage of a natural stronghold as a place of defence from their wild fellow-Christians.

Whence, then, all this talk of the Temple of Anaitis, and the worship of the Syrian goddess in Skye? The mare's nest was started by Dr. Johnson's *cicerone*, the learned Dr. MacQueen, who, thinking that "the meaning of the word Ainnit, in Erse," namely, a water-place, "agrees with all the descriptions of the temples of that goddess, which were situated near rivers, that there might be water to wash the statue," concluded that here had once been a famous pagan temple where the early Celts worshipped the renowned goddess of the mysterious East.[1] Johnson listened to his arguments and castigated him with his customary vehemence: "We have no occasion to go to a distance for what we can pick up under our feet," though (it is to his credit) the learned minister boldly withstood him. Boswell visited the ruins with MacQueen, and was partially convinced when he insisted that "the ruin of a small building, standing east and west, was actually the temple of the goddess Anaitis, where her statue was kept, and from whence processions were made to wash it in one of the brooks." He made copious notes of the divine's learning on the subject, but dared not inflict them on his readers. The whole

[1] Dr. MacQueen was minister of the parish of Kilmuir, and was an excellent specimen of the scholarly cleric of the old days, a man of culture, if a fanciful theorist, able to discuss questions of scholarship with the best scholar of his day.

theory, like that of the Baal-worship of the Celts, rests on the accidental likeness of a Celtic and an Oriental word, and one might as well discover a kinship between Maoris and ancient Egyptians because both worshipped a sun-god called Ra. The fair Anaitis was not even a goddess in exile in Skye, and imagination cannot conjure up her sensuous rites here; it sees only dim tribes fighting on the moor and white-robed priests chanting their liturgies while their voices mingle with the rush of the stream in the gorge far below.[1]

Nearer the head of Loch Bay is the land which MacLeod of MacLeod has recently divided into small farms—an experiment proposed by the Government, and loyally responded to by a chief who is beloved by his people and has their welfare ever at heart. The head of Loch Bay is guarded by steep basaltic cliffs, surrounding it like a dark amphitheatre, and pierced by a deep, narrow cleft—the continuation of the gorge at Anaitis. From the road the ground slopes steeply down to the sea, and from this point there is once more a brilliant outlook to the Outer Hebrides. Opposite is the beetling promontory of Dunvegan Head, 1000 feet in height; and still nearer, as if floating in a quiet sea, a small group of islands. One of these, Island Isay, was offered to Johnson by MacLeod, on condition that he should reside there for three months in the year. He was to build a house there, fortify it with cannon, sally forth and take the Isle of Muck. But the attractions of Fleet Street proved too strong for this Hebridean dream to be realised.

Following the coast-line, the eye loses it at the curious L-shaped promontory of Ardmore, of which more will be said presently, and before one is the

[1] Pennant, of course, connected the place with the Druids. In the houses of which he saw the ruins, "lodged the priests and their families" (*Tour*, p. 341). Col. Forbes-Leslie revived MacQueen's learned nonsense (*Early Races of Scotland*, i. 101 *seq.*).

wide sea girt in by Harris and North Uist. Close by is the thriving township of Stein, and, surrounded by trees, the house of Captain Macdonald of Vaternish, a keen naturalist and sportsman, who knows more of the furred and feathered creatures of Skye than any man living. His otter hounds are famous, and a dozen of them rush out to greet the visitor with shrill barks. Not one of them has a whole body; the fierce otters have deprived them of a lip, an ear, a paw, or what not, but you may be sure the offending otter did not long survive the combat. The grounds of the house are a sanctuary for birds and beasts. In the pond near by a heron is fishing, wild-duck are swimming about, and there is a moor-hen with her brood. She has three each summer, and the first brood nurse the second, and the second the third—precocious nurses like the little girls who live in the slums. All kinds of animals are moving around—hares, rabbits, pigeons, even a tame deer, and tame otters. A gunboat once visited the loch, and the laird of Vaternish paid the commander a friendly call. As they were sitting in his cabin, a wardroom servant put his head in at the door with, "Please, sir, there's a wild beast swimming round the ship!" All rushed on deck, expecting to see the sea-serpent or perhaps a pretty mermaid. But it was only the deer, which had missed his master, and, like a new Leander, had come swimming out to find him.

In the garden is a peregrine falcon with clipped wings, hopping clumsily about, and making a meal off a gull. Look at her eye! What piercing brilliance, what untamed ferocity, what resolution! Indoors are many stuffed specimens, shot, often after days of watching, by the captain's unerring gun. Most of these are rare occasional visitors to these shores, like the Iceland peregrine, or the glaucous gull—a huge white fellow, with snowy plumage. But rarest of all is a fish of the mackerel species caught in a fisherman's net, and rescued just

in time from the pot. It is a foot in length, with a curious underhung mouth, and is rare even in the Mediterranean, which is its habitat. The British Museum regards it from afar with hungry eyes, but not the most tempting offers will lure it from its owner. Here, too (passing from natural history to the romantic), may be seen a cupboard full of Flora Macdonald's china, carrying the mind swiftly back to that age of loyalty from which, indeed, one is never far distant in the Isle of Skye.

Stein is a purely Norse word, and like many another place-name in the island, is found in the saga of King Haco. The Northmen's fleet must often have lain at anchor between Isay Island and the shore, as did the mightier Channel fleet a few years ago. Leaving Stein by the rough road, you soon find yourself on romantic ground, which recalls savage fighting and deeds of darkness. Within the walls of the church whose ruins are seen at Trumpan, the MacLeods of Vaternish were assembled for divine service one Sunday four hundred years ago. Meanwhile Macdonalds from Uist had crossed the sea and landed on the promontory of Ardmore, where they left their boats, and, hurrying to the church, burned it with all its worshippers, save one woman who escaped through a window. As the Macdonalds were enjoying the spectacle with savage glee, they forgot that smoke is seen far off and may easily act as a signal. Their galleys, too, had been spied from the towers of Dunvegan, and the fiery cross had been sent round. From every quarter came twos and threes of the Clan MacLeod. The Uist men rushed for their boats ; the tide had left them high and dry. In desperation they tried to pull them down the strand. Their assailants increased in number, and soon a desperate encounter took place, in which the tables were turned, and every Macdonald was slain. Then their bodies were ranged in a long row beneath a turf dyke at the neck of the promontory, and the dyke was overturned upon them. The place is still

CANDLESTICK CAVE, LOCH BRACADALE

(See page 88)

BASALTIC CLIFFS NEAR TRUMPAN

known as Blar milleadh garaidh, the battle of the spoiling of the dyke; the bones of the victims were seen there within living memory.

This Macdonald raid is believed to have been made out of revenge for the Eigg massacre. Some years later revenge was sought again for this signal defeat. The Macdonalds, as usual, raided the MacLeod's cattle. At daybreak the thieves were overtaken near Trumpan, where a bloody fight took place, and the Macdonalds were killed almost to a man. On each side a blacksmith in full armour remained fighting. The MacLeod blacksmith was failing through loss of blood, when his wife arrived at the scene of conflict. She struck the enemy with her distaff, crying, "Turn to me!" He turned his head involuntarily, and that moment was run through and died. The place of this duel of the smiths is still called Beinn a Ghobha, or the Blacksmiths' Hill. At this same fight, Roderick, son of Ian MacLeod of Unish, did great execution with his sword. At last a Macdonald rushed upon him and cut off his legs at the knees. The doughty clansman continued to stand on his stumps cutting down all comers. At last he fell on the knoll named after him, Cnoc Mhic Iain, the knoll of the son of Ian, and Crois Bhan, the white cross, from a wooden cross placed there to his memory. This cross has long since disappeared.

This district must have been a favourite battle-ground for the rival clans. Another fight occurred here, and is notable because the fairy flag was unfurled when the MacLeods were losing the day. At once it seemed to their adversaries that the MacLeods had increased threefold. Panic seized them, and they fled from the field. Still another dark deed is connected traditionally with Ardmore peninsula. At Cnoc a Chrochaidh, or the Hanging Hill, the son of Judge Morrison of the Lews was hanged on three of his own oars. He had been on a visit to Dunvegan, and, with liberal notions of

hospitality, he and his men had killed some MacLeods on Isay Island. Some galleys followed his boat. Fleeing from them, he landed at Ardmore, where he was caught and hung. Before execution he was bidden to kneel down on the rocks and say his prayers. Long after, silver coins were found in a crevice of these rocks, and were believed to have been dropped there by this thrifty murderer while he was praying.

The peaceful beauty of the scene almost gives the lie to these savage traditions, but men cared little for such things as natural beauty then, and lived only for the lust of fighting and slaughter.

At Trumpan, too, close by the ruined church, died the unfortunate Lady Grange in 1745, the year of the Prince's landing. Her story is one of the strangest of the many strange histories current in the Highlands, and it shows how remote these Highlands were in the mid-eighteenth century, — more remote than are the Fiji Islands now,—and what deeds of darkness might be done there unchallenged in a civilised and cultured age. Lady Grange was the wife of a Scottish judge; his moral character was at least dubious. Her father had been that Chiesley of Dalry who, in a fit of passion and revenge, shot the Lord President Lockhart. She inherited his temper; her husband was said to be a drunkard; their married life became intolerable, and a separation was agreed upon after they had been twenty years wedded. Jealousy of his amours, maternal solicitude for her children, may have turned her brain; it is certain that she taunted the judge in more than one public place, even on the bench. In 1730, Lord Grange was engaged in Jacobite plots with Lovat, Lord Mar, and others. It is said she became aware of this, and now threatened him with discovering everything to the Government. Her "sequestration" was determined upon, and with the aid of the MacLeod of that time—he whose own married life had not been too happy—and possibly

other chiefs, she was kidnapped from Edinburgh by Lovat's followers. Tradition speaks of a mock funeral and a coffin filled with stones; on the other hand, it was whispered in Edinburgh that she had been abducted, though her sons, grown to manhood, and her daughter, Lady Kintore, made no attempt to find her. By secret ways, and under pretext that she was insane, her captors carried her to the lonely island of Heiskar, lying to the west of North Uist, and belonging to Sir Alexander Macdonald of Sleat—a fact which may implicate him. There she was kept for three years in the custody of his tacksman. In 1734 she was carried thence to St. Kilda, MacLeod's still lonelier island in the Atlantic. No one there but the catechist knew English; MacLeod's factor, who came once a year rent-collecting, dared not help her; yet it is known that the wretched lady made some heroic attempts to escape. She was treated as kindly as possible under the circumstances. She had a hut of two apartments, and a woman to wait on her; provisions of a sort were plentiful. Yet such an exile for a woman of her spirit, a woman who had shone among the beauties and wits of Edinburgh, was indeed a diabolical and callous punishment, nor can it be wondered that in a letter still preserved she describes St. Kilda as "a viled, neasty, stinking poor isle." In 1741, when the catechist left the island, she gave him letters for her law-agent, Hope of Rankeillor, who applied for search-warrants and for the arrest of MacLeod and others. These were refused: the reasons alleged being that the letters were in the handwriting of the catechist, and that he was a scandalous and disreputable person.

Meanwhile, Hope fitted out a sloop, which set sail for St. Kilda with the catechist and twenty-five armed men on board. Of this movement MacLeod was made aware, and at once removed Lady Grange from St. Kilda to Harris, and from there to Skye.

Despair and exile had worn her out in mind and body; she became a restless imbecile, wandering freely about from place to place on MacLeod's lands, hospitably entertained by his clansmen for seven weary years. In 1745, exactly fifteen years after her abduction, she died in a cottar's hut, and was buried at Trumpan. Even then her ill fate pursued her, and for some reason unknown a second mock funeral was arranged. A coffin filled with turf and stones was buried in presence of a great crowd of people in the churchyard at Duirinish, the real funeral taking place secretly at Trumpan.

Here Lord Mar caused a monument to be erected to her memory a few years ago, a tardy act of justice and reparation for his ancestor's part in this tragedy —a part which may even have been deeper than is commonly known, for it is said that he, fearing for his neck, would have had her put to death at once, but that Lord Grange would only consent to "sequestration." It is hard to say whether one should wonder most at the indifference of the powers that be in this matter of the abduction, which certainly from 1741 onwards was of public notoriety, or the shameful callousness of her husband, a man moving during the years of her exile in the most brilliant society without exhibiting the slightest compunction, nay, rejoicing at "the timely notice you gave me of the death of that person!" Prince Charles might well have said, "Save me from my friends."

Among the many interesting papers preserved at Dunvegan Castle, few are more pathetic than the yellow, time-worn accounts for Lady Grange's board at St. Kilda, and her funeral (a strangely expensive one) in Skye. They run as follows:—

1.

Debit—The Laird of MacLeod
To Rorie M'Neill.

To Lady Grange board for a year & due the 5th current	£30	00	00
Necessaries provided for her .	3	00	11½
To cash to account of this current year from him	10	00	00
To Mr. James M'Kenzie's board and necessaries for him	09	10	03
	£52	11	02½
By your hon^rs order upon your factor for	£30	00	00
By my bill upon you to Wm. Tolme for	22	11	02½
	£52	11	02½

Dunvegan, *2nd August* 1744.

The above is a Just account betwixt the Laird of MacLeod and Rory MacNeill.

2.

Acc^t. Cur^t. The hon^ble. Normand MacLeod of MacLeod and R. MacNeill of Trumpan.

Deb^tr.—MacLeod.

To one particular an^ct. of expenses in Lady Grange's Interment . . .	£30	15	05
Do. her board r: c: for nine months .	22	10	00
	£53	05	05
Cr.—By cash from M'Leod per Receipt	£1	00	00
By Do. from Wm. Tolme upon MacLeod's an^ct.	21	16	03
By MacLeod's order upon Bay for the ballance boing [?] . . .	21	09	02
	£53	05	05

Dunvegan, *16th August* 1745.

The above An^ct. is filled and cleared betwixt us, errors & omissions excepted by Rory M'Neill.

These documents show that Lady Grange was at least tolerably well provided for, while the tradition

of her wandering proves that she had a certain amount of freedom. But the whole transaction for all concerned in it, is worse than odious, and one cannot but sympathise deeply with the unhappy lady, who endured for fifteen long years the blackness of despair, and at last died among scenes which, however beautiful, could have brought no ray of hope to her anguished heart in her lonely exile.

CHAPTER V

DUNVEGAN

"Hast thou seen that lordly castle,
That castle by the sea?
Golden and red above it,
The clouds float gorgeously.

And fain it would stoop downward
To the mirrored wave below;
And fain it would soar upward
In the evening's crimson glow."

LONGFELLOW (from *Uhland*)

"ANE stark strength biggit on ane craig." So does Munro, Dean of the Isles, describe the ancient seat of the MacLeods at Dunvegan in 1549. When moat and ditch defended the castle from the land side, and the only approach was by a narrow flight of steps from the loch, guarded by portcullis and flanking towers, the description must have been strictly accurate, and the "stark strength" itself quite impregnable. Even now, modern improvements have not destroyed the force of the description, and the most ancient inhabited house in Scotland preserves much of its grim appearance. The name Dunvegan, little dun or fort, suggests that an earlier dun stood on the site of the castle. Tradition gives the tenth century as the date of origin of the keep, the oldest part of the building, perhaps referring to this more primitive dun. Authorities refuse to ascribe an earlier date to the keep than the thirteenth century. Cold criticism and romantic tradition seldom agree, but this much is certain, that

the descendants of Leod have continued to live there since that time when he married the daughter of Macraild Armuinn the Dane, and thus obtained his ancient patrimony of nearly all that part of Skye north of the Coolins. The date of that marriage was the mid-thirteenth century.

The keep surrounded by a rampart, part of which may still remain in the fragments of a ruined wall to the north of the lofty tower, must have been all that existed of the castle at that time. Successive generations enlarged it, and some of its varying forms can be seen in drawings made from time to time. The earliest of these drawings represents the castle as it was in the fourteenth century. The rock is surrounded by a circular rampart, pierced by a door where the stair leads down to the sea. The keep stands at one side of a square fortalice, with narrow windows. Nothing can be seen of the ditch on the landward side, but the rock fronting it must have been as steep then as the seaward rock is now. Alasdair Crotach, or the hump-backed, in the sixteenth century, built what is now called the "Fairy Tower," to the south of the keep, a long and high rampart connecting the two and forming a courtyard within protected on the farther side by the sea wall. A contemporary print shows the Fairy Tower much as it is now—within the projecting rampart with its gargoyles rise the crow-stepped gables, as they still do. Keep and fortalice seem to have been left unchanged by Alasdair, and the picturesque architecture of the newer tower contrasts curiously with the bare and grim outlines of the older building. Within this Fairy Tower a room, now used for storing the family documents, bears the name of Alasdair Crotach's room. Rory Mor, knighted by James VI., and Ian Breac both made other alterations in the seventeenth century, probably making the space between the towers habitable. Some time after this the keep must have become more or less ruinous, for so it is represented in

DUNVEGAN CASTLE FROM THE NORTH

Showing Ancient Entrance from the Sea

Grose's *Antiquities* of 1790. Ian Breac died before he had completed his work, but his purpose outran his accomplishment, and an inscribed stone, still existing, "remains to celebrate what was not done, and to serve as a memento of the uncertainty of life, and the presumption of man."[1] Later chiefs restored the keep, and made the castle assume, as far as was possible to such a grim and venerable structure, the aspect of a modern mansion. A flight of steps gave access from the now useless ditch. These were replaced by a bridge thrown across the moat, while a modern doorway changed the back of the castle to the front, and opens now on a lofty hall hung with trophies of the chase.

The walls of the more ancient part of the castle are extremely massive. In the cellars which now replace the older arched kitchen with its huge fireplace, they are 11 feet thick, and enclosed a huge hall for servants and vassals. Above this they are 9 feet thick, enclosing the hall for the chief and his guests, and what is now the drawing-room. That hall was lit by narrow slits in the walls, but these have been enlarged, and now each window makes a wide recess in the sides of the room, like a series of tiny chapels in some long and lofty church. But who can imagine the scenes which these ancient walls witnessed through the dim centuries since first they were erected—wild revels, deeds of darkness, meetings of council, kilted chiefs and fair ladies footing it in merry reels? Of these history has noted only a few, and those of the darkest and bloodiest nature.

Joined to the keep itself is the modern billiard-room, hung with portraits, and the passage between

[1] The words are Boswell's. The stone has the date 1586 and the following lines of Latin verse:—

Quem stabilire juvat proavorum tecta vetusta,
Omne scelus fugat, justitiam colat.
Vertit in aërias turres magalia virtus,
Inque casas humiles tecta superba nefas.

it and the ancient hall opens upon a dark and windowless room, in the floor of which a hole, covered by a flagstone, forms the one and only entrance to the dungeon below. Through it prisoners were lowered to that ghastly prison from which there could be no possible escape. This narrow dungeon is cut out of the rock on which the castle stands to a depth of 16 feet. Light is admitted from a narrow loophole facing the north, but high up in the rocky wall, so that the prisoner might have no glimpse of the beautiful world beyond the impenetrable wall. Part of the staircase which led up from the kitchen to the hall still remains, but the old staircase within the keep has long ago disappeared. But in the sixteenth-century tower, the Fairy Tower, as it is called, you can still ascend to the battlements by the narrow, steep, and winding staircase as of old. Use and wont doubtless made things easier for the people of old than for their luxurious descendants, but as you toil upwards, fearful of knocking your head or grazing your shins, you perforce marvel at their agility. And how Dr. Johnson must have puffed and groaned as he toiled upwards to the haunted room in which he slept, and which, later, was given to Scott at his own request, and christened by him the Fairy Room! Above it is the muniment room, crowded with interesting family letters, documents, and charters black with age and covered with crabbed writing. And above that again you come out on the battlements and look down on the waving boughs of countless trees, the blue loch, and the green islands on its breast.

The sea-gate still remains, with the worn steps leading up to it, and opens into a narrow passage the walls of which are grooved for the portcullis, and pierced by a hole 10 feet deep for the heavy beam which barred the doorway from within. On the right of the passage is the ancient well of the castle, now boarded up, for in its cool depths a

servant who had tasted something else than its waters was drowned several years ago.

Before the woods were planted and nothing but the bare moorland surged up to the castle moat, it must have presented a grim and repellent appearance. "The great size of the castle," writes Boswell, "which is partly old and partly new, and is built upon a rock close to the sea, while the land around it presents nothing but wild, moorish, hilly, and craggy appearances, gave a rude magnificence to the scene." But now with its modern front and surrounded by woodlands it is only romantic and picturesque, as if it had become the home of the muse of history. Its grimness returns to it when it is viewed from the beach to the north. Then it stands clear of trees; its lofty tower, and flanking turrets, its outworks and battlements running at every conceivable angle, are seen against the sky, and present a bewildering variety of mediæval architecture. And all this mass of grey building is "biggit on a craig" greyer and more lichen stained and ever so much more ancient than itself, while the sea laps its base perpetually. Seen on a winter afternoon from the north, its towers look weird and ghostly, and whisper of the strange scenes they have witnessed in bygone days.

Of those scenes none are more ghastly than the series of tragic events connected with the name of Ian Dubh in the sixteenth century. When William, the ninth chief, died in 1552, his brothers, Donald and Tormod, were absent, and Ian the Fairhaired, a descendant of the sixth MacLeod, was hailed as chief. Ian had married Sheila, a daughter of Macdonald of Knock, and had several sons, one of whom, Ian Dubh,[1] was a man of evil and atrocious deeds, hated and feared. A meeting was held at Lyndale on Donald's arrival to decide the chieftainship, and again Ian the Fairhaired was chosen. Donald retired to Kingsburgh, where Ian Dubh visited him,

[1] The Dark or Black.

pretending friendship, and invited him, with six followers, to meet him at the mirk midnight to make arrangements for enforcing his just claims. Donald, unexpectant of evil, arrived with his men at the rendezvous, where Ian Dubh and his men at once despatched them. Ian the Fairhaired ordered the arrest of Ian the Dark, who at once fled to Castle Uistean to the equally treacherous Hugh MacGhilleasbuig — a Macdonald. Meanwhile Ian the Fairhaired died, and his third son, Donald Breac, was made tutor to his grandson, Tormod. Ian Dubh now began to play his cards. Sallying forth from Castle Uistean, he took Dunvegan Castle, put its warders to the sword, and made a prisoner of his brother Tormod's widow. When Donald Breac and Tormod's three sons returned from the funeral of Ian, they found Dunvegan's gate closed against them and all admittance refused. Ian Dubh appeared in full armour at the head of the narrow stairway above the landing-place. There a hand-to-hand fight took place between him and Donald, and the latter was slain. Tormod's three sons were now slaughtered by this avenging Jehu of Skye, the wives and children of several leaders of the clan were seized, and his remaining brothers shut up in the dungeons of the castle.

At this point the Campbells of Argyll saw fit to interfere, basing their right on their guardianship of Mary, William's sole child. A large force landed at Roag in Loch Bracadale, and their leaders offered terms to Black Ian. He arranged to meet them at the church of Kilmuir, and there the terms were agreed upon, on Ian's part only outwardly. He invited eleven Campbell chieftains to a great feast in Dunvegan Castle. According to the old plan, each Campbell was sandwiched between two MacLeods. After the feast a cup of blood was placed before each guest, and at this gory signal each Campbell was stabbed by his neighbour, Ian Dubh selecting the leader for himself. It was probably

in the present drawing-room that this tragedy occurred.

The end of Ian was a fitting sequel to his evil life. In 1559, Torquil, William's brother, arrived at Dunvegan to make good his claim. Ian expected help from Hugh MacGhilleasbuig, but it did not come. Treachery was within the walls. A warder, Torquil MacSween, agreed to give up the castle, and secured all the passages save that leading to the entrance and communicating with Ian's bedroom, guarded by his foster-brothers. The noise of Torquil MacLeod's entrance alarmed Ian. He reached his galley and sped to Harris. Driven thence, he went to Ireland. His career was over; he became a beggared wanderer, until he was seized by the O'Donnells, whose chief thrust a red-hot iron through his bowels. An equally horrible fate awaited his fellow-traitor on the Macdonald side, MacGhilleasbuig, as we have seen. They were well matched for a couple of quiet ones!

The treasures of the castle are many and various. First and foremost is the Fairy Flag, or Bratach Shi. Tradition says that a fairy wife of one of the chiefs presented it to him when she left the land of mortals for ever. She bestowed upon this flag the power of three times succouring the chief or his clan, after which an invisible being would appear and carry off flag and standard-bearer never to be seen again. A family of Clan y Faitter acted as hereditary guardians of the flag, and bore it in battle, holding in return free lands in Bracadale. Twice at least its power was exerted, once when Clan Donald was gaining upon the sons of Leod and the banner made their numbers appear tenfold in the eyes of the former, and once again when it preserved the heir about to be born. Pennant avers that, in his time, it was too tattered for Titania to think it worth sending for. Scott mentions that besides these extraordinary powers it had also the power of ensuring fertility and of bringing herrings to the loch.

The flag is of yellow silk, with red spots wrought at intervals on its surface. The material is threadbare, so that it cannot ever be waved a third time, and even a fairy might scarcely touch it without tearing it, while its splendour has faded to a dingy hue. It is not impossible that it was captured from the Saracens, and that the common Norse traditions of magic banners gifted by supernatural beings were later attached to it. It now rests in a glass case in the drawing-room, beside Rory Mor's drinking-horn and the Dunvegan cup. The former is a long ox-horn, with a deep silver band, engraved with animals and an interlaced pattern of Celtic type and of twelfth-century date; the mouth was firmly grasped in the hand, while the horn twined round the arm; and each chief, as he came of age, was expected to give proof of his manhood by draining its contents at a draught.[1] The cup is of Irish origin; and is made of dark wood, covered with rich ornamental work in silver, possibly of a later date than the cup or "mether." The silver work is of filigree and niello, and was once encrusted with precious stones which have disappeared. On the four sides of the rim are panels containing the following inscription: Katharina Ingen Y Neill Uxor Johannis Meguigir Principis De Firmanæ me Fieri Fecit, Anno Domini, 1493. Oculi omnium in te sperant Domine et tu das escam illorum in tempore opportuno.[2] The latter part of the inscription and the four times repeated sacred monogram I. H. S. in the interior of the cup, suggest that it may have been used as a chalice. Nothing is known as to how the cup came into the possession of the MacLeods: it may have been the spoil of some fight or the dowry of a bride.

[1] Armstrong in his *Dictionary* suggests that it may be the horn of a urus. Urus horns were ornamented with silver, and used as drinking-cups by the ancient Germans.

[2] Scott bungled the inscription in a most marvellous way. See his notes to the *Lord of the Isles*. Johannis Meguigir is John Maguire, whose death is recorded in the *Annals of the Four Masters* under the year 1503.

Two other glass cases contain autograph letters from Johnson and Scott, while several other letters of Scott's, as well as some from the Ettrick Shepherd, Pitt, and other notables, are among the family papers. Scott presented to the Lady MacLeod of his time his own *Lord of the Isles* and his edition of the Rev. Robert Kirk's *Secret Commonwealth*. Both are in the library, and the latter has this characteristic inscription in the faded handwriting of the poet—

> "Mrs. MacLeod of MacLeod
> from her faithful humble servant,
> W. S.
> 'Of bogles and brownies full is this book.'"

A case in the dining-room is full of various treasures. There is a lock of Prince Charles's hair—part of that cut by Flora Macdonald at Kingsburgh, and presented by her daughter to the MacLeods. It is golden and silky—*she clipped a lock wi' her ain hands frae his lang yellow hair*—and one wonders why it never betrayed him when he was a fugitive. There, too, is his waistcoat (a gift from Flora Macdonald's family) — cream silk, embroidered with brown and yellow, and showing signs of wear; his drinking-cup; Flora Macdonald's stays—very worn and frayed and dirty; her pin-cushion, with the names of those who suffered after Culloden; some of her lace; and a variety of interesting odds and ends.

In the corridor are hung weapons of every age, including Rory Mor's two-handed sword, which Johnson said he would fight against with a dirk, and the claymore of the chief who raised a thousand clansmen and led them with it for the king at Worcester fight in 1652. There too are an ethnological collection from Zululand, many skins and heads of big game, brought here by the present chief, and all sorts of native manufactures from St. Kilda.

Among the many family portraits which look down from the walls are those by Allan Ramsay of the

so-called "wicked chief" and his second wife. It was he who refused aid to Prince Charles, and, if tradition is to be credited, shut his first wife in the castle dungeon. Two exquisite Raeburns, of his grandson, the general, and his wife, are the gems of the collection. Their colour is fresh, and no crack has appeared in the canvas to destroy their charming colouring and magic portraiture. But these are only a small part of the interesting contents of this venerable house, always interesting in itself, but tenfold more so when its kindly owner, the twenty-third chief of his line, beloved of his tenants in Skye and of his clansmen "from China to Peru," tells the story and describes the successive changes of this ancient home of his race.

To live in such an ancient house is to put one's finger upon the pulse of time and feel the vanity of human life. Generations of men and women have lived here; these grey walls have been the outer casket of ever-recurring hopes and fears and joys and sorrows, which, one and all, died with those who experienced them and gave no sign; they have witnessed the ceaseless contest of birth and death, and seen ghastly murder done in distant centuries. And away beyond them, in the great world, what wild ecstasy during the course of these generations — all the multiform drama of existence in the crowded years, men and women in countless millions born, dying, and vanishing away, nations rising and being overthrown—and these walls existing all the while, wrapped round by eternal silence! The thronging highway, the bustling market, forbid such thoughts, for they enlist us perforce in the service of the present, and we think bravely that our puny efforts must have infinite results. But within these ancient and silent walls, surrounded by the solitudes of nature, shadowy woods and changeless moorland, time laughs at our egoism, and sends us in upon ourselves and binds us willing slaves to the service of the past.

From the castle windows you look down upon the waters of the loch—the haunt of herons and sea-fowl, whose discordant cries alone break the silence. The blue water glitters ceaselessly in the sunlight. Beyond the loch rise the green and fir-clad slopes of Uginish, with bright golden patches of gorse nestling amongst rocks and trees. In the distance rise the purple Tables, Healaval Mor and Healaval Beg, great isolated remnants of the vast basalt plateaux which once covered the island, and flat like the famous Table Mountain half across the world. And over all is the sapphire sky to complete a summer landscape which none could wish to be better. That is on one side of the castle. But you may shift your point of observation, and stand towards evening at the billiard-room window, below the shadow of the ancient keep. There are islands and jutting capes and promontories and rolling waters. Far out at sea is the dark basaltic headland, 1000 feet high, and on the horizon the dimly descried peaks of Harris. At times all this is magically transfigured by the setting sun, till all is like an eve in a sinless world. The surface of the nearer sea is pink, then crimson, then purple; and farther away it is covered with a silvery sheen. Islands and capes are incarnadined, or stand black against the glowing background, and are imaged in the still waters across whose glimmering surface the seabirds are skimming, leaving long streamers of light behind them. The light clouds take a hundred tints of gold and crimson and saffron, and float like unearthly visitants across the opalescent sky. The sun, like a blazing shield or a globe of crimson fire, sinks lower and lower into the waves and merges itself in its image, sending a last flash on to the castle walls, and making clouds, sky, sea, and islands one crimson picture. The sky clears, the stars come out faintly in the June midnight, and a crescent moon rests over the dark turrets.

Or, yet again, you may watch from the summit

of the tower the whispering woods piled upwards from the moat far below to the heights that edge the moorland far away. Their leaves, in every conceivable shade of green, form a sea that gently undulates in the breeze or tosses tumultuously in the tempest. From its hidden depths well up the music of a thousand joyous birds, and the air is redolent with the odorous fragrance of fir and pine. Amid the nearer skirts of the woodland you see patches of yellow primroses still in flower, and the purple mist which the wild hyacinth makes with its uncounted blossoms above its own bright green leaves in the early summer.

But it is not always early summer, and there are days even in summer, above all in winter, when the sky vanishes, and becomes a mere dingy waste, across which scud drifting clouds and mist, hiding the Tables. The rain falls in vicious torrents and plunges against the windows behind which you watch the wild commotion as the wind drives the waters of the loch to break angrily in foaming waves on the rock-strewn shore. Over among the islands at Colbost the white foam is continually dashing upwards, and retreating broken and spent from the impassive sea-front. The white horses dance on the horizon by Dunvegan Head, and among the islands, until with hiss and splash they surge below the castle walls. At night the whole train of chiefs with their respective "tails" might parade in the corridors and yet be unheard amid that commotion of the elements, while doors and windows rattle, and the wind howls eerily in the chimneys. But ensconced behind walls 9 feet thick, wrapped in the deep spaces of a vast bed, one cares little for the tempest, and sleeps in peace till morning. Then, so swift are the changes, it may be brilliant sunshine when the morning breaks. The sea will be a placid mirror in which every tint of the morning sky is reflected, and the Tables and every knoll and tree on the opposite shore have

their counterfeit presentment in this watery looking-glass.

Striking northwards from the castle, until you emerge from the shadowy woodland, you follow a road which will lead you to Claigan Farm. It winds between gentle slopes, odorous with the savour of bog-plants, heather and thyme and myrtle; below the ruined Suardal, where MacLeod's hereditary blacksmith lived, and whence came the old minister of Morven, ancestor of the genial Norman and of other ministers known well in Scotland; then casually crossing a river and passing a clamorous rookery, it brings the pilgrim at last to a scene of exquisite beauty. The blue loch runs far inland between its grassy shores, which are here and there flecked with patches of the purest white, of which I shall come to speak presently. Beyond the southern shore lies Glendale with its thick crofting population, and in a sheltered cove nestle the white walls of Husabost; beyond that again is Borreraig, where in days of old the famous school of pipers existed; where the land ends, Dunvegan Head, a black, massy foreland, precipitates itself into the sea. On the right shore, beyond your point of observation, is a lesser but equally steep cliff, and between the two headlands the loch widens out into the sea, across whose waves, on the far horizon, lie the Outer Hebrides—North Uist and Harris—in a shimmering blue haze. There are the conical peaks of Harris, a dozen and more in number, looking out, on the remote western side, to far St. Kilda and the Atlantic liners steaming to the New World; and down upon the rocky Sound of Harris, the problem of navigators who may be strangers to its labyrinthine waters. On a clear day persons gifted with good sight can descry houses on these far islands, but mostly they are vague masses in the blue haze, and are often topped with white clouds. If the pilgrim can consent to turn his back upon this picture, nature is still kind to him. The grey walls

of the castle are no longer visible, but there is the loch with its precipitous islands, green as emeralds. On one side of it MacLeod's Tables look down, while the other is clothed with the dark woodlands in which the castle is hidden. Beyond miles of shaggy moorland the waters of Loch Bracadale gleam in the sunshine, and Talisker Head frowns down upon them from its giddy height. Out to sea are the peaks of Rum, and, inland, the Coolins flecked with snow if it is June, or covered with it if it is December.

The rookery near by is also a heronry, and the gaunt white herons are perceived sitting on the topmost branches of the firs like spectre birds. Along with a black cloud of clamorous rooks, they fly out heavily as one approaches, and circle indignantly through the air. Like Jew and Samaritan, rook has no dealings with heron, but each keeps strictly to its own end of the wood, and lives unconscious, to all appearance, of the existence of the other. Opposite, the rounded heather-clad slopes which shut out the seaward view are haunted by the cuckoo in spring, and all day long her melancholy flute-notes echo in the valley, where, by good fortune, you may catch a glimpse of the shy bird flying from bank to bank. And thus you realise, with strange minuteness, Wordsworth's lines about

> "the cuckoo-bird
> Breaking the silence of the seas
> Among the farthest Hebrides."

For some miles you may walk along these green undulating slopes by the sea's edge. In early summer they are white with sandwort, mingled here and there with redolent thyme, and blue speedwell, or the yellow tormentil flaunting it among the grass. So you pass on amid these hillocks, musical with the echoes of the sea, over a soft and springy turf, and then to the sea's edge bright with golden iris, by a path leading down a steep cliff. Here is Coral Bay. Above is a great escarpment of basalt,

with stair-like dykes of dolerite running vertically through it, and below it is a bed of native coral, many feet in depth, all in broken fragments, some as big as one's fist, but mostly mere tiny pieces, their white brilliance contrasting vividly with the black boulders which strew the beach.[1] These are the records of many a wild winter's storm, of great waves coming in from the open sea and breaking violently on the cliff until they have battered great hollows in its base. At the openings of the cliff the greensward runs down to meet the blue sea, and on the rocks grow sea-pinks and sea-campion, yellow trefoil and glossy ivy, while in the pools on the shore are hundreds of anemones, and now and then a piece of pink coral. There is no sound but the lapping of the waves; the sea is like burnished steel; you lie on the hot coral and blink at the sun blazing out of the azure sky, or watch a ship travelling slowly on the distant horizon; you are filled with the ineffable peace of the landscape; you dream vaguely of piping tempests when the black waters are lashed to fury, and break in foaming cataracts over the spot where you are lying, of desolate days when the scene is blotted out in the whirling vapour and driving rain, and the caves of the wind have let loose some of their worst blasts.

Or, forsaking these open spaces, you may wind through the shadowed woods, amid larch and pine, fir and sycamore and beech; cross several rivulets, and, after climbing a hillside, emerge on the top of a lofty knoll, where the scent of the bog-myrtle pervades the air. Beneath and all around are green wooded hollows, with sometimes a yellow laburnum or a red rhododendron peeping through the trees and giving a touch of tropic colour to the sombre woodland. At your left, clear cut against the blue sky, are the Tables in the distance. Beyond the trees, with the loch as a background, rise the ancient grey towers

[1] The coral is really an algæ (*Melobesia fasciculata*) with the power of secreting a limy frond.

of the castle. Its grim walls, suggesting the din of war, contrast strangely with the peaceful scene ; but a hundred years ago, before a single tree had been planted, the grey towers must have looked still more grim, when, in the precise Boswell's words, "the land around it presented nothing but wild, moorish, and craggy appearances." Whatever story these walls and towers suggests, no warder or armed sentinel with dirk and claymore paces the battlements now ; no kerchief of maiden in distress waves from turret windows ; no din of clashing blades rises on the breeze. The islands on the loch's surface are like emeralds set in gold, for the seaweed which fringes their shores is of a brilliant yellow colour and gives a luxuriant richness to the landscape. Every indentation and cape and bay of the opposite shore is distinctly visible in the inimitable seaside brightness of the air. Cottages nestle on its side, and the pleasant house of Husabost lies sheltered beneath a fold of the hill. Behind it, a white road gleams through the heather and strikes across the moor to Glendale, of riotous memory. Still farther on is Dunvegan Head, and across leagues of sea the Outer Hebrides once more and the rocky Sound of Harris.

Seen across this waving sea of foliage, the castle towers have lost much of their grimness, but before the woods were planted the eye caught sight of them over miles of bare brown moorland, and they seemed indeed those of an enchanter's castle in the waste. All the travellers who reached its hospitable gates speak of the wild romantic effect produced on their minds as they first saw the grey battlements standing midway between moor and sea. But it is still romantic enough in this age of whirling life, and suggests visions of the early centuries, of knights and ladies and kilted clansmen, giants and enchanters, dragons and monsters, and mermaids singing over the blue waves that break for ever beneath its walls.

CHAPTER VI

LOCH BRACADALE

"O'er all the land the sunlight lay,
The waters seemed asleep,
The blue heavens hung their azure shield
Over the quiet deep."

AMONG the many sea-lochs of Skye few are so diversified and broken, or offer such a charming variety of scenery, as Loch Bracadale. It is more than possible to say a good word for all these many lochs, and indeed memory lingers pleasantly over their individual attractions. But there is this about Loch Bracadale that it seems to combine these into one, or rather to offer them separately at different points. Portree Bay is famed for its cliffs, but Loch Bracadale can hold its own there. Loch Dunvegan boasts of its green and purple islands; Loch Bracadale has islands too. The Coolins seem to rush tumultuously down into Loch Scavaig; do they not stand boldly in the background, from whatever point Loch Bracadale is looked at? And what can equal the emerald slopes of Loch Harport—that long and sinuous arm which it sends far inland; they have not their like in all Skye.

This loch of many enchantments lies on the west side of Skye, and opens into the Atlantic. Its mouth, four miles wide, is guarded by lofty basaltic cliffs on either side. On the north these jut out at Idrigil Point; on the south the frowning headland of Talisker, Rudha-nan-Clach, forms similarly the

angle of a line of massive cliffs. From these cliffs the shores bend inwards on either side, thus presenting a wide front seawards as the background of the loch. Time and tide have carved this background into a rugged and broken coast with jutting peninsulas and smaller lochs twisting inland, while fragments of what was once the shore have been left stranded as rocky islets with steep sides facing seawards. There are the successive peninsulas of Greep, Harlosh, and Uilinish, enclosing Loch Varkasaig, Loch Vatten, and Loch Caroy; and strewn over the wide surface of the loch are the islands of Wiay, Oransay, Tarner, and Harlosh. Between Uilinish and a finger of land pointing outwards from the peninsula of Talisker, the loch narrows, but again opens and divides into two as Loch Beag and Loch Harport—both carved out between steep banks by glacier and river action until they have become long arms of this great sea-loch.

Such is Loch Bracadale, and it is easy to believe that from whatever point it is seen—from some lofty site inland, from any of its windy headlands, from one of its islands, or from a boat on its surface—it is always charming. In storm you see the white waves plunging, churned into foam, against its black promontories and headlands and rocky islands, frowning more grimly than ever under a canopy of leaden cloud and driving mist and rain. But under a cloudless summer sky how fair it is! The calm blue water gleams in the sunshine like burnished gold and silver; the black crags are softened and mellowed; the green islands lie placidly on the breast of the sleeping waters; and the infinite variety of the broken encircling coast-line reflects a thousand changing lights like the facets of a diamond. You cease to wonder, as you gaze upon that dazzling, gleaming picture, why Merlin "followed the gleam." The fascination of it enters your own soul; you try to analyse its charm, but it is too airy and indefinite; when you think you

have solved it, it is only to find that something has eluded your grasp, to reappear in some new protean disguise till you are bewildered with so much beauty.

Let us embark on its waters and pay a visit to MacLeod's Maidens, which lie beyond Idrigil Point. The boat is waiting at Harlosh, on one of the peninsulas which run out from the inner shore of the loch. Wishing the Norse-looking boatmen good-morning, we are soon gliding over the surface of the loch, calm in this June weather as a sea of glass. The boatmen do not sing the rowing songs as their ancestors used to do—solemn and slow airs with a rhythmic chorus to regulate the stroke of the oars, but they point out the objects of interest and take us where the wonderful coast scenery can be closely inspected. Half-an-hour's rowing brings us to the neck of Loch Varkasaig, guarded by steep and massy cliffs under the shadow of the greater of MacLeod's Tables. Then, hugging the coast, we make due south for Idrigil Point and the Maidens.

Just opposite is Harlosh Island, beyond it Tarner Island, and farther south Wiay. All are basaltic, presenting steep escarpments seawards, less steep on the landward side, and covered with rich green verdure. The laird of Uilinish carried Johnson and Boswell to Harlosh to see the great cave which pierces it, and which is said to come out, after a long underground passage, in the cliffs near Portree. It is called Uamh-an-Oir, or the Cave of Gold, because, like a similar cave in Kilmuir, a pot of gold is said to be buried there. The usual legend of the piper who entered the cave, pipes sounding in full blast, but, like Macrimmon, never returned, attaches itself to this *antrum immane*, and he is still heard feebly piping, "I doot, I doot, I'll ne'er come oot!"

How wonderful is the long coast-line from Varkasaig to Idrigil. The boat glides on beneath the shadow of mighty cliffs, descending sheer into the water; broken and shattered in places, or cut here

and there by narrow ravines down which a burn dashes. The successive layers of basalt, betokening each a new eruption, can be traced easily, piled one above the other. In the crevices of the rocks are clumps of sea-pink or rose-root, ivy trails itself over the lofty edge, or rare ferns grow in inaccessible places. Sometimes the cliffs recede and leave a little pebbly strand, or at some other place vast heaps of boulders stained with spray and lichens have accumulated beneath them. But most wonderful of all are the occasional detached pillars of rock, the numerous caves, and the natural arches, which follow each other in quick succession. Not far from Idrigil Point the cliff sends a bastion out into the sea. Half-way it is split almost to the sea's edge by a wide fissure, and the inner half of the bastion is pierced with a great oval hole through which, on approaching it from either side, the line of cliffs and the water beyond is seen framed as in a picture. The caves are of two kinds. They are formed of a single arch, cut neatly in the basalt, or they pierce the cliff behind a series of broken arches and ledges and columns and great pendants of rock. Into some of them it is quite possible to take a boat in calm weather; but, rowing into them, one can only imagine the fierce clamour and wild revelry of the waves in their gloomy recesses during a storm. In one of these caves near Idrigil Point, Lady Grange is traditionally said to have been imprisoned for a time after having been brought to Skye.

And now, having rounded the point, the largest of all these curious caverns is found. The cliffs here are 500 feet in height, and this particular cave must be at its entrance at least 150 feet high. The entrance resembles the half of a huge dome, but its sides are far from smooth. They are pierced with crevices, cut into shelves and ledges, and carved into isolated stacks of rock, while just outside the inner mouth is such a pillar on a wide base, called appropriately "the candlestick." Beyond

MACLEOD'S MAIDENS

it all is blackness, but the entrance is a curious mixture of black and white, for the waves and spray have encrusted the dark rocks with salt. On the ledges are crowds of cormorants sitting on their eggs, their long snake-like necks and beaks twisting about as they watch the movements of the boat.

As we leave this magnificent example of water action on solid rock, the Maidens come into sight. They are three isolated pillars of rock standing in the sea just beyond the mighty cliffs. Once they were part of the solid cliff itself, but age-long denudation has sculptured them out, and, like the pillars and pinnacles at Quiraing and Storr, left them standing in isolation. Compared with her two sisters, the Maiden nearest the cliff is a giantess in bulk and height. The other two rise from one foundation, and beyond them is a reef of rock which bears evident trace of having borne a fourth Maiden long ago. We row between them and feel as if at the feet of some of the giantesses of whom Norse story tells. We remember how Sir Walter called them (his mind running on Norse mythology) the Choosers of the Slain and Riders of the Storm, but we marvel to think how he saw them, with the waves lashing in fury around them, from the windows of Dunvegan Castle. How fond the beloved Wizard was of adding a stick and a cocked hat to his reminiscences! Locally the Maidens are known as a mother, Nic Cleosgeir Mhor by name, and her two daughters. The mother is the largest of the three, and is said to be continually weaving a web which one of her daughters as continually fulls or thickens. The second daughter apparently is a fine lady, and does nothing.

Landing on the rocky shore below the cliffs, we have time to explore the innumerable aquaria with their anemones and shells and sea-weeds, and to note the sea-plants and ferns (the sea-spleenwort, the holly, the hartstongue) which fringe

every crack and crevice. But most delightful of all is the view, though that is best seen from the dizzy height of the cliff above.[1] Take it from there. The Maidens are curiously foreshortened as we look down upon them ; the giantess has the appearance of an old lady in a high mob-cap seated in an arm-chair. On her sculptured ledges seabirds are sitting, patiently hatching their eggs. But how charming is the wide expanse of sea ! Just beyond the cliff the breeze ruffles it into a series of ripples mingling with each other, and proving the truth of Tennyson's epithets, so strange to him who has not seen them realised,—" wrinkled sea," and " dappled dimplings of the wave." Then it spreads itself far and wide in a vague gleam of mingled light and shimmering water. The coast-line of Skye extends in a broken line to the jutting point of Sleat, and you note the magnificent unbroken wall of lofty cliffs stretching from Loch Bracadale to the headlands at Glen Brittle. These massive rocks, 1000 feet high, seem the very essence of everlastingness and stability, and yet we know they once stretched out where the sea now lies, and that at some far distant day they too will have disappeared. Between them and the conical peaks of Rum is a glimpse of the mainland and the mountains of Arisaig. On this side of Rum is Canna, flat and green ; beyond it is the sharp sgurr of Eigg. Then comes a long unbroken horizon on which, but for the summer haze, Coll and Tiree might be seen. Westwards lie Barra and Uist and Benbecula, and with a glass you can make out the fishing-fleet at the first island. Turning back from this wide seascape, the loch in all its ramifications lies at your feet. Its islands seem to float on its calm surface ; its peninsulas stretch long fingers into its waters, and its waters run inland for many a

[1] The cliff is not climbable, but can be reached by a tough walk of eight miles from Dunvegan, over innumerable hills and hollows and singing burns, through a country empty of all habitation save an occasional shepherd's hut.

mile. Northwards over leagues of moorland is the precipice of Storr, and, finest of all, the extended line of the upheaved mountain masses of the Red Hills and the Coolins. First comes Ben Tianavaig at Portree, then the twin humps of Glamaig, the cones of Marsco and Beinn Dearg, followed by the many shattered peaks of the purple Coolins, terminating seawards at Glen Brittle and Loch Scavaig. It is a wonderful picture of land and sea—rolling moor, mountain chains, islands flat and hilly, and moving waters, and all steeped in that magic light which seems peculiar to the glad summer-time in these western isles.

From the sea the successive layers of basalt in the cliffs and the Maidens are clearly seen. The cliffs are 400 feet high, and in them as many as fourteen beds of lava, averaging nearly 30 feet in thickness, may be counted, and witness to as many outpourings of volcanic energy in long past ages, and at distant intervals, as one may judge by the intervening layer of red which tells of decayed rock surface. In the highest Maiden (she measures 150 feet) there are ten such sheets, varying from the massive prismatic basalt to the more amorphous amygdaloid forms which are mostly in thinner sheets.

We leave these interesting geological formations with reluctance and return shorewards, marvelling at the strange story which they reveal.

The road which has been already described as branching off near Dunvegan from the Great North Road of Skye until it arrives at Sligachan and rejoins it there, runs for three-fourths of its length along the shores of Loch Bracadale and its arms, Lochs Beag and Harport. For well-nigh thirteen miles it offers the traveller a ceaseless succession of new glimpses of loch scenery. As each peninsula is crossed, a new vista of sea and land and sky is gained, so that, if the weather is propitious, the long journey is far from tiresome. And besides the view of the

loch, there are the islands which come into view one by one on the distant horizon—Rum and Canna, Benbecula and Barra and S. Uist, and the bold front of the Red Hills and the Coolins, from this point seen in all their dizzy height,—a long purple mass with a series of shattered peaks rising from it against the sky. The vast expanse of the sky itself, hanging far above the rolling moorland and the gleaming loch, seems to widen the view into infinity, while loch and moor, like receptive mirrors, answer to every variation of this airy curtain. Neither sea nor land are expressionless ; they are full of character, and have their passing moods like the most human of human beings ; and we feel, if we have any skill at reading them, that they speak to us the secret thoughts of nature itself, and that these thoughts are not so far different from the yearnings and fancies of our own soul.

> "All nature is a vast revealing,
> We know our soul's infinity
> When on still moor or silent sea
> She sways with the great pulse of feeling."

To the traveller on this road from Dunvegan the loch first comes in sight a mile or two above the township of Roag, and he will be at once impressed with the puzzling complexity of the numerous peninsulas and islands, among which and beyond which the waters of the loch appear and disappear and reappear, as well as by the steep angular front of these peninsulas and islands, dipping suddenly into the sea. Their black precipitous fronts contrast curiously with the brilliant green of their rolling surface, and their retreating shores are here and there splatched with rich browns and yellows, where seaware has been flung up by the waves, or has found a foothold on the rocks. To the right, commanding a wide expanse of country, are MacLeod's Tables, their flat tops and the series of successive steps in their flanks showing how the molten basalt

had flowed out in successive sheets from time to time. These vast sheets have been hewn and carved, and the evidence of this mighty earth sculpture is seen in the shattered cliffs of the loch and the lofty Tables far above it.

Passing Roag and crossing the neck of Vatten Peninsula, Loch Caroy comes in sight. Just where the road begins to dip down to the head of the narrow loch, two great heaps of stone are seen on the right, piled high above the brown moorland. Tradition says that on this magnificent site was fought the last battle between the rival clans of Macdonald and MacLeod. It was fought in the mist, like that other *last weird battle in the West*; the heather was dyed a deeper purple with the blood of the clansmen, and when the day was done the bodies of the slain chiefs and warriors were buried here, and these vast cairns piled above them. There "lie the mighty bones of ancient men, old knights." Some years ago the late chief of MacLeod began to excavate one of the heaps, but the work proved too laborious, the feeling of the countryside was against all such meddling with the dead, and the work was abandoned. Perhaps, too, the workmen were afraid of encountering the "barrow-dweller," the strong ghost who has so often scared and forced to single combat the robber of ancient Viking graves.

So runs the local tradition, but an inspection of the mounds proves them to be chambered cairns of the Neolithic age, long anterior to any historic clan feuds. Several other cairns, of a smaller type, are scattered over the moor, and conceivably the place may have been the scene of a prehistoric battle, but much more likely it is a prehistoric cemetery—the large cairns being those of the chiefs; the smaller, of the common people.[1] The cairns are much dilapidated, but there is still scope for systematic work

[1] This arrangement of several smaller mounds associated with one or two larger heaps is not uncommon. See Greenwell, *British Barrows*, p. 112.

with pick and spade, with the inevitable reward of interesting "finds."

At the head of the loch stands the little Episcopal church of St. John the Baptist, in what is one of the prettiest spots in Skye. A torrent comes rushing down a steep ravine, and passes by the churchyard wall. The churchyard lies sloping to the loch; its graves nestle below waving trees; from early spring onwards it is gay with flowers—snowdrops, primroses, and wild hyacinths; the torrent murmurs and the waves break on the shore close by continually. It is a beautiful but lonely place—an oasis in the waste of the moorland, where

> "Amid the ivy, peers the church, and waves
> Of dreaming seas lap its forgotten graves
> In deeper rest."

The silence of the moor is lulled to a deeper stillness in this sacred spot. The church was built sixty years ago for the convenience of a few families living each several miles off in different directions, but its regular use has long ceased, though its churchyard is still kept trim and beautiful. But local legend, averse to prelacy, sees in this peaceful spot a haunted scene. "The people who pass there at night will be seeing things." And if you press for a further explanation of the "things," you are told, "Well, there was no good man ever buried there." Poor suffering Prelacy!

At this sacred spot the sea is thought to be fast encroaching on the land, and may in another century have engulfed the lower parts of the churchyard. The space between the church and the loch was formerly much larger; the grandmother of my informant remembered it as a wide green space which was once the rendezvous of the Clan MacLeod. Here, in 1745, when the fiery cross went round Skye for the last time, the clan mustered eighteen hundred strong. The chief, overcome by the prudent counsels of President Forbes, told his men

he would not lead them for the Chevalier. At this disappointing news two hundred of the clan at once marched off and joined the brave Prince, who might have come to his own had the clans of Skye thrown in their lot with him. But it was not to be!

For the next four miles the road rises and falls over the moorland, opening up new views of the loch at every corner, and presenting, at every rise, the vision of the purple-shadowed Coolin and the sunny Red Hills, stretched like a mighty barrier along and above the distant horizon. Talisker Head, too, comes into closer sight—a mighty headland, which once dipped sheer into the waters of the loch, but has now a pile of boulders at its feet, fallen from the cliff above. Between the loch and the road, in a hollow of the moor, stands Uilinish house, where Dr. Johnson passed two cheerful nights, discoursed on many things, decried Ossian, and found (a rarity in Skye then) "a plentiful garden and several trees." On this occasion, too, Boswell caught a solitary "cuddy" in Loch Bracadale. The rising ground near the road is Knock Uilinish, and, like many place-names in Knock, was an ancient seat of justice. Just below it is one of the few "Erd-houses" in Skye, which will be fully described hereafter.

Now the loch, bending round the peninsula of Uilinish, divides into two arms. The first of these, Loch Beag, is nearly two miles long, and is very narrow. The road, doubling on itself, winds round its shores at the bottom of a steep glen, and above it rise precipitous hills, which are continued beyond the loch in the ravine through which flows a typical Highland burn. Along the north shore of the loch lies the village of Struan; in another green glen, parallel with that just mentioned, is the parish kirk of Bracadale ("We are not likely to be prosecuted for ritual practises here," said the minister, satirising its plainness); and up the side of this glen climbs a rough road to Portree. This road is worth travelling on, if only to get the impression of the loneliness of

the Skye moorlands, for you may travel its whole extent and not meet with a fellow-wayfarer. When the head of the glen is reached, you find that you are looking down into that other glen which opens into Loch Beag. Far below, at the foot of a steep ravine, sings the burn amid walls of rock and beds of fern and flowers. The upper sides are grassy and often slippery as ice: the writer, trying to assist a friend, glissaded down with incredible swiftness for several yards, but fortunately was fixed fast by a stone just on the edge of a precipice, his camera being shot out of his hand to the depths below, to be picked up later —unbroken. Then the ravine widens and opens upon a green meadow with two or three crofts, and narrows again where the waters of Loch Beag come far inland.

From the head of this ravine the view on a fine day is one which can never be forgotten. The eye follows the gleaming thread of water in the ravine, through the meadow, into the loch. The steep sides of the hills which hold it attract you next; its mouth is hid by a knob of land; beyond that is a gleam of water at the entrance to Loch Harport; then another jutting finger of dark rock with the waters of Loch Bracadale beyond it. Now the full majesty of Talisker Head breaks upon the eye. You see a grass-covered hill jutting out into the sea, and, as if cut with a knife, stop short suddenly in a black face of sheer cliff, 900 feet high, a wonderful headland which stands dark and threatening against blue sky and glittering water. In the strong sunshine the waters of the loch and the open sea beyond gleam and sparkle and shimmer in the pulsing light. And on the far horizon lie the south end of South Uist, Barra, and the small islands dotted between them, half hid in a golden haze. This is one view of Loch Bracadale and its horizons; the other from Idrigil Point, its guardian on the west, has been already described.

For such a view alone it is worth while walking

or bicycling or driving over this lonely road from Portree, and in addition the pilgrim will have two others—one of the blue hills of Harris on his right, the most extensive of all in Skye, and on the left, high over the valley of Glenmore, the splintered masses of the Coolins. And he will learn something of the secret charm of the lonely moorland, its vastness, its detachment, and the infinities of mountains and seas and skies which lie beyond and around and above it.

The district around Loch Beag, with its green glens, must have been populous even in early times. No less than five duns are in the neighbourhood—a sure sign of a populous, if not congested district. One of these, Dun Beag, to the left of the road before reaching Struan, is the best preserved of the many duns in Skye, though only suggesting what it once was. Either it, or Dun Mhor, was visited by Johnson, and Pennant describes it as it was in his day.[1]

The road is now carried farther inland, and though running parallel to Loch Harport for six miles, low hills hide its waters, until the head of the loch is nearly reached. Then it crosses two successive ravines carved out of the hillside, down which dash brawling torrents to the loch far below. Loch Harport, a long snake-like water, runs south-eastwards for two-thirds of its length, and then bends nearly eastwards. For its whole length it is enclosed by nearly perpendicular green banks, running up into occasional hillocks. At its head is Drynoch, long the home of the MacLeods of Drynoch. A cart-track branches off here from the main road, and, following the southern shore of the loch, leads to the famous Talisker distillery, whose waters, as everyone knows, come over fourteen falls. Down by the loch side is an ancient burying-ground, with a few scanty trees, broken headstones, and rotting stumps covering its irregular surface. Here are buried some of the

1 See p. 266.

MacLeods of Drynoch, their bones resting still on the land from which their descendants have long been exiles. You trace the foundation of an old church; none knows its name; the whole place is grisly and gaunt and cheerless, as if a curse rested on it.

It surprises you in this silent glen, by the lonely loch, to see the signs of a modern distillery, and hear the sounds of mechanical labour. Yet even they cannot detract from the charm of these vast solitudes; they are enwrapped by them; and perforce you give them a romantic colouring. Surely they are the scene of some secret enterprise hid, in this remote glen, from human observation; surely they can never manufacture nothing but whisky here! Beyond the factory is Fernielea, where Johnson and Boswell landed on their way to Talisker from Uilinish, and the path which strikes over the hill at the back of the distillery is probably the one they traversed. It leaves Loch Harport behind, and, after crossing four miles of rough moorland, arrives at Talisker Bay facing seawards beyond the guardian cliffs of Bracadale. The green glen facing the bay is one of the most beautiful and fertile in Skye. Perpendicular cliffs, pierced with dark caverns, form the coast-line on either side, and sailing past them, you are scarcely prepared for the vision of this lovely glen, with its farmhouse and yellow fields. And if it is exposed to the vast rollers which break with thunderous crash on the black cliffs, and the fierce south-westerly gales, yet the view outwards and seawards must compensate for many a gloomy day.

Beyond the head of Loch Harport the green slopes continue and form a narrow winding glen, traversed by a fine salmon stream and by the highroad to Sligachan and Portree. In long-past ages the water of the loch must have bathed the steep sides of this narrow valley, as they do to-day its lower reaches, while glaciers have helped to carve its sides as they pressed onwards to the outer sea. The upper end of this winding valley, where the road bends round

towards Sligachan, marks the former bounds of Loch Harport, while a series of curious rounded eminences in the bottom of the valley, with long ridge-like tails, like some stranded antediluvian monster, were once green islets in the narrow loch. The exquisitely green slopes of this glen are covered with the marks of cultivation, and show that it once was filled with the populous hum of men. Thousands of families must have lived and died along this rich valley, until emigration and sheep-farming restored it to its ancient solitude and brought back *the silence of the midmost sea* which once laved its narrow sides.

Beyond the southern side of the glen rise the shattered peaks of the Coolins in a long line, and quite near at hand, as if watching over the ridge the intruder in this solitary glen. At the eastern end of the line are three of the five pinnacles of Sgurr-nan-Gillean rising one above the other; then the great massive bulk of Meall Odhar, with the tooth of Bhasteir peering beyond it; then Bruach-na-Frithe, Sgurr Madaidh, Sgurr Thuilm, Sgurr-na-Banachdich, and Sgurr-nan-Gobhar. The names seem as craggy as the mountains themselves! One winter afternoon when a keen frost had come, it was my fortune to ride down this glen. Not a breath of wind stirred the air, no cloud flecked the intense blue of the sky. The slopes of the valley, no longer green, but grey and fretted with black torrent beds, were tinged with warm hues by the setting sun. The shattered pinnacles and crags of the Coolins cut the sky; snow filled their dark recesses and was slowly dyed a brilliant red by the sunset. Every sense was exhilarated by the intense vividness of the scene and the keenness of the air. One was steeped in silence, broken only by the murmur of the stream gliding over its stony bed in the bottom of the valley. And if an ancient and prehistoric inhabitant of this glen had appeared, it would scarce have been a surprise, for the silence and the remoteness make one oblivious of time and of the lapse of history. Such is part of

the ineffable and indescribable charm of the Isle of Skye!

As the inn at Sligachan is reached, the massive cones of Glamaig and Marsco and the broken summit of Blaaven become more prominent, and between them and the Coolins lies the wild Glen Sligachan, surrounded by fierce mountain walls, boulder strewn, the workshop of some Titan long weary of his toil. But we have left Loch Bracadale far behind and reached the waters of Loch Sligachan on the east side of Skye, and it is time to draw this chapter to a close.

CLIFFS PIERCED BY SEA

(See page 88)

CHAPTER VII.

STRATH AND THE SPAR CAVE

"Sand-strewn caverns, cool and deep,
Where the winds are all asleep;
Where the spent lights quiver and gleam,
Where the salt weed sways in the stream."

MATTHEW ARNOLD.

A WIDE sweeping bay, whose shore is dotted round its whole length by crofts and cottages; beyond that the moorland undulating far inland till it rises into distant hills; a long pier stretching out into the water, and at its landward end, nestling among trees, the dainty shooting lodge of Corry; while over all loom the steep sides and rounded summit of Ben-na-Cailleach,—and you have Broadford in your mind's eye. You look at it from the deck of the steamer, and save on some early summer morning, when it is flooded with the rich light of the dawn, you think it uninteresting. But stand on the shore and look seawards, and your opinion must change. The sea is so shut in by islands, by the Skye coast and the mainland, that it looks like a vast inland loch. The level coast-line of Skye runs down to Kyleakin, where you perceive, in the distance, a raised seabeach. There the mainland seems to join it, for the dividing strait is invisible from this point of view. The eye follows up the mountains of Ross-shire with their various shapes, long-backed hills, broken peaks, cones, pyramids. Far across you see the wooded Applecross, erstwhile the seat of a

famous monastery, nestling below the shadows of the brooding hills. Right in front is the flat island of Pabay, its surface covered with boulder clay, and, in Dean Monro's time, three hundred and fifty years ago, clothed with trees to the water's edge. There lurked many robbers, ruffians, and broken men. Not a trace of the trees is left, but there is good grazing for sheep, and the ruins of an ancient chapel prove that the broken men might have had the consolations of religion, did they want them. Farther out to sea are the purple Crowlin Islands, and, closing up the view on the left, is hilly Scalpay. When the sea is like glass, and the world is bathed in sunshine, no scene could be more peaceful, more suggestive of that light that never was on sea or land. And, far above, on the bald summit of the lofty granitic Ben, rests the Norse princess under her cairn of stones, her spirit breathing the winds that come to her from *Norroway o'er the faem.* She pined for her home among the fjords, and now she rests beneath the starlit spaces amid the lightning and the tempest. How indomitable was the spirit of these hardy Viking men and women. In thought you people the bay and the sound with Haco's galleys, their huge sails bellying with the wind, and their rowers bending to the oar and singing the songs of the skalds to Odin and Thor.

From Broadford roads branch off to Kyleakin, to Armadale, to Strathaird, to Sligachan and Portree. Let us follow the road to Strathaird, one of the most romantic and beautiful in the valley, till it brings us to Loch Slapin and the famous Spar Cave.

The road strikes at once inland, through a long green valley, winding among the hills, and gradually narrowing. Here it is scattered over with blocks of grey stone and patches of quartz, there it is covered with birch. On the right hand of the valley stand Ben-na-Cailleach and the rounded battlements of

the Red Hills, Ben Dearg Mhor, and Ben Dearg Bheag, their steep sides gleaming in the sunshine, or, if it is a wet day, swathed in mist, while the wind sobs and moans in the corries. Under the shadow of the first is the old farm of Corricatachan, where Pennant and Dr. Johnson were entertained with true Highland hospitality; where Boswell, after a night of Highland whisky, awoke with a headache, and the English moralist took a married lady on his knee and "was like a buck indeed." The house was full of people; "how they were lodged," says Boswell, "I know not. It was partly done by separating man and wife, and putting a number of men in one room, and of women in the other." These were simple times, when hospitality was without affectation, and romance was not wholly dead.

Close by the road at this point once stood a "Druidical" circle, and beside it is a fairy mound, where the good people still come out on moonlight evenings, and dance to elfin music on the green turf. A mile farther on is the old ruined church of Strath, with its ancient place of graves, and below it the still waters of Loch Cill Chriosd. Hither came St. Maelrubha, a thousand years ago, from Applecross to preach the faith, and hung his bell on a tree, where, we are told, it remained for centuries, till it was removed to the church near by. So long as it hung on the tree it was dumb all the week till sunrise on Sunday morning, when its voice pealed forth of its own accord until sunset. But when they took it from its tree it remained dumb for ever, and the tree soon after withered away. Perhaps the bell still exists in some remote corner, for such relics were seldom destroyed. Nothing now remains of the church but its walls and gables, mantled with ivy, while in the churchyard around sleep the long generations of the nameless and voiceless dead.

A few slightly carved and probably very ancient stones are still remaining, but mostly an unhewn,

unlettered slab of stone is all that marks their sleeping-place.

Do their ghosts people the churchyard in this lonely glen at the mirk midnight? Once, some years ago, a withered soldier came every quarter to Broadford to draw his pension. There his potations were deep, and his tongue wagged to a breathless audience of his wonderful deeds. But some, more critical, doubted, and resolved to test his courage. Slinking off one evening while he held his audience in boastful talk, they marched up the glen to the churchyard, keeping closely together, we may presume, and there, clad in white sheets, awaited their victim. Whether inspired by real or by Dutch courage, he walked straight up to them as soon as he saw them. "Ach!" he cried, "you have not been long buried; you are too fresh, whatever." The ghosts squeaked and gibbered and shook their garments. "Ach! ye needn't try to frighten me, for if you do, I'll raise the spirits of my ancestors and they will keep you down." And with that he fell to beating the ghosts till they howled for mercy, and then like Christian he went on his way rejoicing.

The road sweeps down the glen in a great curve, under birch-clad hills, till at the head of Loch Slapin and under the shadow of Ben Dearg the primitive township of Torran is reached. The cones and bold summits of the Red Hills are clustered like mighty giants round the head of the loch, contrasting in their pinkish hues and in their sweeping curves and unbroken fronts with the purple Blaaven, a seamed and shattered mass of gabbro, which stands as outpost at the end of the amphitheatre. Here, amid the unbroken silence, the lives of these primitive villagers are lived out. What thoughts are aroused in them as they contemplate in all the majesty of sunshine or storm these vast upheaved masses which seem ready to crush them, or listen to the wind as it shrieks and bellows in their hidden recesses? What do the

voices of the sea and of the mountains whisper to them, year in, year out? For countless ages this hidden valley has been the abode of men. It saw pagan rites of an unknown antiquity — the traces of a stone circle are yet to be seen near by. It witnessed the coming of the Cross and the fall of heathendom — side by side with the circle is the site of a chapel dedicated to St. Bridget, beloved of the Celtic people. The web of love and hate, of joy and sorrow, has been woven here in this remote glen through the centuries, but it is hidden by the spirit of Eld, and the mountains and the sea will not betray the secret. Here, surely, might a poet or an artist seek inspiration for picture or lyric; and here, too, might one, weary with life's battle and haunted by memories of what might have been, seek rest in nature's mysterious sanctuary.

Such thoughts fill the wayfarer as he looks upon the silent mountains and begins to climb the road above the western shore of the loch. It is steep and narrow, but it opens up ever-changing aspects of the landscape. The whole of the eastern shore of the loch, forming one side of the peninsula of Sleat, stretches outwards in a long line till it ends in the rugged Point of Sleat. And now the road descends rapidly to Strathaird, where fertile fields lie between rising knolls, and some ornamental cottages (part of the improvements of a former laird) give a touch of southern cheerfulness to the rugged landscape with their brilliant white and red walls and doorways. There, too, is the beautiful house and grounds of the present genial proprietor, filled with objects of price, paintings, china, and bronzes, from the gorgeous East. And over all broods the mighty mass of Blaaven, gleaming with rich purple, its clefts white with dazzling snow-wreaths, and wisps of cloud stealing around its secret top. It is a mountain among mountains, a king among them all, whose magic influence fills the heart, and whose secret

Alexander Smith tried to discover in that magic poem of his:

> "O Blaaven, rocky Blaaven,
> How I long to be with you again,
> To see lashed gulf and gully
> Smoke white in the windy rain—
> To see in the scarlet sunrise
> The mist-wreaths perish with heat,
> The wet rock slide with a trickling gleam
> Right down to the cataract's feet;
> While towards the crimson islands,
> Where the seabirds flutter and skirl,
> A cormorant flaps o'er a sleek ocean floor
> Of tremulous mother-of-pearl."

But there are other objects of natural beauty to be seen in Strathaird, and not the least of these is the famous Spar Cave, the finest of the many caves which pierce the rocky coast of Skye. It is on the farm of Glashnakill, near Rhu-na-Heskan, or the point of the eels. To reach it one must go by boat from some point near Kilmoree, or from the opposite coast of Sleat, but even this is only possible in fine weather and with a favourable wind, for the shore is strewn with boulders and lined with cliffs, against which a boat would have little chance of safety in a heavy sea. Through the courtesy of the proprietor of Kilmoree, I was able to visit the cave on a cold but brilliant April day. The coast-line from Kilmoree to the cave is built up of lofty cliffs of argillaceous sandstone, or oolite, lying piled in thin strata closely arranged like some vast heap of sheets of paper. These horizontal strata of brownish-grey rock are divided, split, and fractured perpendicularly by deep clefts and fissures, some of them so narrow and so close as to appear vertical strata of some darker rock. They were once filled by molten lava which the tooth of Time has long since eaten away, though in other parts of the cliff the dykes are still remaining—black bands crossing the yellow sandstone strata at right angles. Up these fissures the sea-waves lash, or boom with a hollow reverberation in the numerous

CLACH GLAS AND BLAAVEN

caves into which the cliffs are hollowed at their base. Where the sandstone is intersected by the dykes or beds of trap, so common in Skye, they seem to rise up the face of the cliff like some steep flight of narrow steps. The cliffs mount ever higher as the coast runs southwards, but occasionally it is less steep, and runs back landwards in a gentle slope, covered with birch and rowan.

Past a jutting promontory a great gash between two perpendicular walls of oolite suddenly comes into sight. It runs in a narrow lane between these walls, which look as if they had been built by the hand of man, so straight are their sides. The whole floor of this lane is covered with boulders. Here is the landing-place, where, as we walk up the sloping floor of the chasm, it is as if we had entered a stony prison. Far above is a ribbon of blue sky, and the eerie silence of the place, solemn as some deep cathedral aisle, is broken only by the echo of our footsteps on the stones, or by the voices of the boatmen. The gap becomes narrower as we proceed and the floor steeper, until it ends in a barrier of rock in which is the mouth of the cave. Just in front stands a wall built across from cliff to cliff and pierced by a doorway, which once boasted a door with bolts and bars. It was built by a former proprietor a century ago, to keep out the explorers who robbed the cave of its exquisite stalactites. Here Sir Walter Scott came in 1814, and, with his party, scaled the wall "by the assistance of a rope and some ancient acquaintance with orchard breaking." Alas, some years after, a yachtsman plumped a shot through the door, carrying it clean away, and now only wall and doorway remain to tell the tale.

The mouth of the cave is high and narrow, and betrays nothing of the beauty which is hidden far within. Yet it is fringed with drooping hartstongue, growing to an immense size in this cool and moist retreat. Within, all is darkness save for the gleam of the candles which each of the party carries. Ad-

vancing over the round masses of white stone which form a floor sloping gradually upwards for about forty yards, one is suddenly arrested by what seems at first a perpendicular wall, but which turns out to be a frozen cataract of white marble, 30 feet high, filling up the whole space between the white walls which tower overhead till they are lost in the darkness. But though this cataract is so steep, its surface is so rough as to afford a convenient foothold to the hardy climber, if he keep close to the wall on the left hand. Nearly two-thirds of the way from the top of the ascent rise on either side lofty columnar pillars, arched over by the roof, their tops seemingly carved into capitals. Beyond the arch the roof expands into a dome, whose height can only be guessed at, as it is soon lost in impenetrable darkness. Our guides stand beyond the arch with candles, and from the darkness below we look forward through pillars and arches. It is as if we were gazing through the dim shadows of a Gothic cathedral, upon its lighted sanctuary where mystic rites are being celebrated.

Beyond the pillars, a few steps more carry the climber to a flat top under the dome, on the floor of which is a pool of water so limpid and clear and held in so white a basin as to be almost invisible. Overhead are great stalactites hanging in innumerable clusters like pointing fingers from the arching roof. The walls are broken up into white masses of every conceivable shape, which it takes little imagination to depict as chairs or pulpits, niches and statuary, or any other suitable human contrivance. From this level floor the cave slopes downward for a few feet to a lower level, where another but larger pool blocks up any further passage. It is about 15 feet in diameter, and, with the extraordinary purity of its waters and the marbly whiteness of its sides, is like a fountain in which the naiads might have disported themselves if ever they had come to Skye, or swan-maidens have left their feather garments on the brink and revelled in its waters. Scott makes Allan in his

Lord of the Isles, while keeping his midnight watch by Coruisk, revisit in fancy the

> "mermaid's alabaster grot,
> Who bathes her limbs in sunless well,
> Deep in Strathaird's enchanted cell.
> . . . . . .
> His foot is on the marble floor,
> And o'er his head the dazzling spars
> Gleam like a firmament of stars."

Beyond this pool the cave is said to narrow into a passage which ends soon after, but tradition holds otherwise, and says that MacLeod's piper marched onwards, his pipes in full blast, and was then lost for ever to human ken.

Even now the white floor and walls of the cave, formed by the dripping water into a hundred fantastic shapes, its great height, its unbroken stillness, convey to the mind a picture of weird beauty. But the countless visitors who, for a century back, have visited the cave, have despoiled it of its greatest charms. The thousands of long pendant stalactites have disappeared; smoke from candles and torches have dimmed in part the whiteness of walls and roof. Scott has the same story to tell in his day, so that, even then, the work of destruction had begun. But what the earlier glories of the cave were is seen from a glowing description penned in 1811, which exhausts language in depicting them, and speaks of marble monks and nuns, caryatides and statues, carved columns and a hundred other wonders.[1] Though the existence of the cave was well known to the natives, the author says it was first "discovered" or visited by Mrs. Gillespie of Kilmoree. Now it is known as the Spar Cave; Scott calls it Macallister's Cave; but in Gaelic it is Slochd Altrimen or the Nursling Cave, and thereby hangs a tale.

[1] "A Description of the Spar Cave lately discovered in the Isle of Skye, with some Geological Remarks relative to that Island. By K. Macleay, M.D. To which is subjoined 'The Mermaid,' a Poem. 1811.

In the ninth century, MacCairbe, king of Ulster, sailed for the Hebrides, where, as the native princes were absent with King Anlaive of Norway fighting the Picts, he was able to devastate the land and commit many wanton cruelties. His fleet had to shelter at Colonsay, whose chief, attached to MacCairbe by relationship, though forced to submit to the Northmen, received him kindly and sent his son with him to Ireland. And now the lords of Skye invaded Ulster, defeated MacCairbe, and carried off his daughter as well as young Colonsay. On returning to Skye a fearful storm succeeded a night of calm. Only one galley was left; it ran for shelter into Loch Slapin, where it was upset. The Princess Dounhuila was watching from her father's tower, and fled to the beach where young Colonsay was washed ashore. He was taken to Dunglass, and kept there for many months. And now to a pitying maiden and a susceptible youth, with her parents the deadly foes of his kin, what was left but secret love? Dounhuila anticipated certain death as soon as her father discovered that she was no more a maiden. But at this time he left Dunglass on a distant expedition, and she persuaded the keepers to let the prisoner go. Then she gave birth to a son, who was carried to the cave by a trusty servant, and there he was guarded by Colonsay's dog. From time to time the young mother came thither to nurse her child. At last the feuds of Dunglass and Colonsay were patched up; the union of the lovers took place; and the nursling of the cave was allowed to see the cheerful light of day.

We, too, returning to daylight and resuming the sea journey, are rewarded by a brilliant landscape after the gloom of the cave. Across the gleaming waters lies the coast of Sleat with low-lying hills sheltering the lonely hamlets of Taskavaig, and Orde, and Gillean, and Daalvil. In front the waters of Loch Slapin divide, and part runs far inland to form Loch Eishort, where far beyond its valley peer

the hills of Inverness-shire across the plain of Skye. The twin summits of Ben Dearg look down on the head of the loch, at their side is Ben-na-Chro, and peering down upon us is the wrinkled face of Blaaven once more. Far out to sea lies the coast of Ardnamurchan beyond the Point of Sleat, hazy in the dim distance, and on the horizon are the islands of Eigg and Rum. A great cloud of smoke rising from Eigg suggests the volcanic upheavals which once formed its lofty sgurr, but really tells of nothing more harmful than the spring heather-burning which, just now, is going on briskly all over the land.

CHAPTER VIII

SLEAT AND ARMADALE

"Sleibhte riabhach nam ban boidheach"
(Brindled Sleat of the beautiful women).
GAELIC PROVERB.

THE different geological formations of Skye affect the nature of the coast-line as one leaves behind the uniform lofty basaltic cliffs which run northwards from Portree Bay to distant Staffin. From Loch Sligachan to Broadford the Red Hills and the Coolins behind them take the eye and the mind at once captive. The long steep sides of Glamaig plunge straight into the sea, and the whole series of pyramids and cones forms a most imposing mountain mass under whatever atmospheric conditions they are seen. Their massiveness is the more pronounced because their sides are unbroken by projecting bosses and rise straight from the sea-level. Seen from the sea or from the coast of Raasay, they always remind one of the mountains which watched Childe Roland as he came to the Dark Tower—

"The hills, like giants at a hunting, lay,
Chin upon hand, to see the game at bay."

The whole view from the deck of the steamer as it reaches the narrows of Raasay, always seems to me one of the finest examples of West Highland scenery. Close at hand are the granitic Red Hills, pale red and yellow in colour, their flanks marked by long lines of scree descending from summit to base; beyond them are the darker and more shattered peaks of the Coolins; while, as the eye wanders northwards up the gleaming Sound of Raasay, it

sees the long line of basaltic ridges and sills with their green slopes, stretching from Ben Tianavaig up to Staffin. Now it advances a bold escarpment seawards; now it retreats in a curving line; and far above the seaward cliffs is the vast ridgy backbone of the Trotternish peninsula, the most prominent object of which is the Storr Rock, with its black precipices and pinnacles and flying buttresses standing out against the sky.

Then these lofty hills give place after Broadford to a low-lying coast-line, marked, as one reaches Kyleakin, by a raised seabeach running in a straight line above sea-level for nearly half a mile. At Kyleakin, a pretty and growing village, the mainland comes close to our island, and the railway terminus of Kyle of Loch Alsh is seen across the narrow channel. It may be permitted to a lover of nature to hope that it may be many a long day before the iron horse will leap the channel and come shrieking through the valleys and glens of beautiful Skye, disturbing their "ancient, solitary reign."

Perched on a rock overlooking the Kyle is Castle Maol, a ruined keep of vast strength, whose story will be told in a later chapter, along with that of Haco, who gave his name to the Kyle, and whose galleys lay at anchor here on their way southwards to the fatal battle of Largs. In front lies Loch Alsh beneath a magnificent amphitheatre of mountains. The coast of Skye, meanwhile, turns at a sharp right angle into Kyle Rhea, whose opposite shore is a projecting nose of the mainland. "Kyle Rhea" takes us back to the days of the Feinne. These heroes had ill-luck at the chase for many a day, but as they grew thinner their wives grew fairer and comelier. Conan was set to watch, and discovered that their food was the tops of the hazel trees, boiled, while they washed themselves in the "bree." But they had their revenge on Conan for the discovery of their secret, by tying his hair to stakes while he slept, and then suddenly awaking him. He sprang up and

left his scalp behind him. Smarting with pain and shame, Conan shut the women up in a hut, piled brushwood and heather around it, and then set the pile on fire. The Feinne, hunting in Skye, saw the smoke across the strait. With their swords they leaped the strait, but one of their number Mac an Reaidhinn fell short and was drowned. From that day to this his name has been given to this winding strait. The women were saved, but Conan lost his head.

Precisely at the angle stands Ben-na-Cailleach the second (the first is at Broadford), which is the advance guard of a new line of hills running down towards Isle Ornsay in Sleat. But most striking of all is the narrow strait itself through which the swirling tide-eddies flow with incredible swiftness. Its black surface is marked by whirlpools and the swirling lines of currents and eddies which make one giddy to look at them, until suddenly the boat is swept into the open amid placid and calm waters.

Woe to the yachtsman or fisher who does not know the condition of the tides in this dangerous channel. He will be swept hither and thither like a cork on the swirling current until he is dashed helplessly on the rocky shore. On both sides of the narrow strait, looking down into its restless waters, stand high rounded summits, their sides scarred and seamed with torrent beds, and rough with huge bosses of shapeless jutting crags. Their lower front presents a steep face to the sea (into which they dip down suddenly) of precipitous rocks, rounded and ice-worn. At a higher level, their slopes are gentler, affording pasture to many sheep, or purple with beds of heather. Here and there on these uplands are hollow dells, fragrant of thyme in summer days, sheltered and warm, where the rush of the waves is reduced to a low-sounding murmur; or in places a few scanty birch trees quiver in the breeze, or a clump of hazels shelters a brawling stream eager to throw itself seawards. After a snowfall, few sights

could be more pleasing than the prospect of these hills on a clear winter day. The blue sea rolls and tosses at their feet; half-way up to their summits they are dressed in a snow veil of spotless purity, glistening in the sun's glow, and suggesting (as in childhood's dreams) visions of angels; the deep torrent-beds are filled with shadow, and appear like long dark ribbons stretching in zigzag fashion across the pure surface of snow. Far above, the rolling line of the hilltops melts away vaguely into the brilliant sky, and gives the impression, in the clear air, of a picture painted against a flat background.

The narrow strait winds round in a half-circle, and, emerging from its confined channel, widens out into the long Sound of Sleat, down which and between lines of noble hills, broken by numerous sea-lochs and sheltered bays, one may look to the open sea, stretching far beyond to the gleaming horizon, on the right of which lies the island of Eigg with its lofty sgurr. On the Skye side, the hills which bound the shore, now lower, now higher, are divided by green valleys and sheltered hollows, facing southwards, nestling in the sunshine, and hidden from the bullying north-easters: Kinloch, guarded by the steep, birch-clad slopes of Beinn-na-Seamraig; Duisdale, where stands a pleasant cottage hidden in rhododendrons and odorous pines, with rich gardens where the flowers seem never to wither, once the home of the kindliest of hostesses, full of charming reminiscences of the old days of Skye; Isle Ornsay, in whose landlocked bay a fleet of fishing-boats may find shelter from the trumpeting squalls and bursting surges outside; Knock, where the old ruined castle of the Lords of the Isles perches, toppling, on a crag.[1] Beyond the wall of swelling hills which shuts them in, there are glimpses of the Coolins, Blaaven, the Red Hills, and Ben-na-Cailleach,

[1] Isle Ornsay is St. Oran's Isle, and his name is again commemorated, though in a corrupted form, in Loch Hourn on the opposite coast.

towering high in air, and peering curiously above these less ambitious summits

And now the country becomes less rugged and puts on a more fertile and homely aspect. It rises gently from the sea in long undulating slopes, on whose green terraces and folded hollows are innumerable crofts with their pasture land and corn and potato patches. For miles the coast is dotted with them; above their brown roof-trees curls blue smoke in wavering columns, and an odour of pungent peat-reek is wafted seawards; they give an air of cheerful habitation after the lonely hillsides. For Sleat, "brindled Sleat of the beautiful women," is the garden of Skye, *hortus inclusus*, a garden enclosed, full of fertility and easy to cultivate; and, in summer, when you see the luxuriant vegetation, flowers of every colour and kind growing in such profusion as you had never dreamed of, green hedgerows, lush meadows, bosky trees, you know that the name is well deserved, that it is as if a slice of rural England had been transported to this land of shaggy moors and solitary hillsides.

This marrowy country soon loses itself among the dark woods of Armadale, stretching far along the shore and high up on the hillside. Through their leafy branches peer the green lawns and graceful towers of the ancestral home of the Lords of the Isles. Its regular Elizabethan architecture harmonises with its soft and genial surroundings; it completes the illusion you have cherished that this is a bit of England; the grim walls of MacLeod's ancient castle would be as much out of place here as Armadale would be on the wild shores of Loch Dunvegan. Armadale Castle was built when the wild unsettled days were over, when the fiery cross had burned itself out, and when the clan fights had ceased to stain the heather a deeper purple and leave red ruin in their train. Its walls are too recent to have rung with the clash of weapons or the echo of murderous cries. It was built for comfort, not defence. The

ARMADALE CASTLE

The Modern Seat of the MacDonalds of the Isles

DUNTULM CASTLE

The Ancient Seat of the MacDonalds of the Isles (see page 40)

only suggestion of past perilous times and of a fabulously ancient line of ancestors who lived claymore in hand and claimed equal regal rights with the kings of Scotland, are the portraits on the walls and the figure of the founder of the family, Somerled, Rex Insularum, who, clad in chain shirt and battle-axe in hand, looks down from the great painted window above the wide staircase and the lofty hall. But it is a far cry from the twentieth century to the twelfth, in which the first Somerled made his name renowned, and the beautiful fan-tracery of the ceilings and the tall mullioned windows breathe an air of luxurious comfort which Somerled never knew, and to which, had he known it, he would have shown himself supremely indifferent. But his descendants are as hospitable and brave as ever was their far-off ancestor. All Skye mourned the loss of the brave boy who went forth to die for his country, and who now rests in a soldier's grave in Africa, far away from the lochs and hills of Skye which he loved so well. *Dulce et decorum est pro patriâ mori!*

The castle, with its wide, bird-haunted lawns, edged with tall firs and odorous limes, stands high on the seaboard, so that from its windows the grassy levels seem to dip down suddenly into the waters of the Sound of Sleat, which, running east and west like a broad belt of silver, fills up the foreground. Beyond it and following its whole length, is such a succession of peaks and summits as could hardly be seen from any other single point of observation in all broad Scotland. Far to the left rise the mountains which overshadow Loch Hourn, the bald broad mass of Ben Screel towering high above them and looking over into Glen Shiel, where, in 1719, the forces of the rightful king contended with the redcoats of the usurper, and down which Dr. Johnson travelled fifty-four years later and "owned he was now in a scene of as wild nature as he could see." The eye follows the range westwards to where, directly opposite, the beautiful Loch Nevis

with its islands opens out to the sea. Guarded at its mouth by the steep beetling promontory of Creag Iasgach on the west side, on the east by broken peninsulas and islands, it retreats far inland amid a huddled crowd of hills crowned in the far distance by the sharp and lofty twin peaks of Ladhar Bheinn. At dawn the morning mists fill the spaces between these summits, and the sun, as it rises, floods them with a weird light and tinges the mist as it disappears with rich hues of gold and crimson, while the solemn peaks look down into the dark and hidden valleys, where the sea makes an unheeded music. Or even if the sun be hidden, yet the lights are ever changing on these "glimmering limits, far withdrawn," which are reflected as in a mirror on the unruffled surface of the sound when the wind has ceased to torment it and there falls a great calm. But, indeed, it would take long to tell of the changing beauties of that opposite shore, seen so often from the windows of the hospitable castle, at dawn, at summer noontides, or when the red light of the dying sun is reflected at late evening on the dim peaks.

It is again a curious change as you traverse the few miles which separate Armadale from the Point of Sleat. You pass as if into a different region. You exchange smooth lawns, and shadowy woods, and fertile slopes, for a rough, even savage territory, wind-vexed and sea-salted, rising and falling with fearful abruptness, and, at last, dark and grim as Erebus. You have left the younger basaltic and gabbro and granophyre rocks, and have emerged on a bit of the gneiss formation of the outer isles, laid bare after long ages. The road follows the sea, mostly at a considerable height above it, and, hewn in the mountainous seaboard, now projects into the water, now recedes from it where some ravine is carved deeply into the land. From it you gain a long vista of the sound and the opposite coast-line with its towering mountains and broken reefs. Its long line runs towards Ardnamurchan Point, where

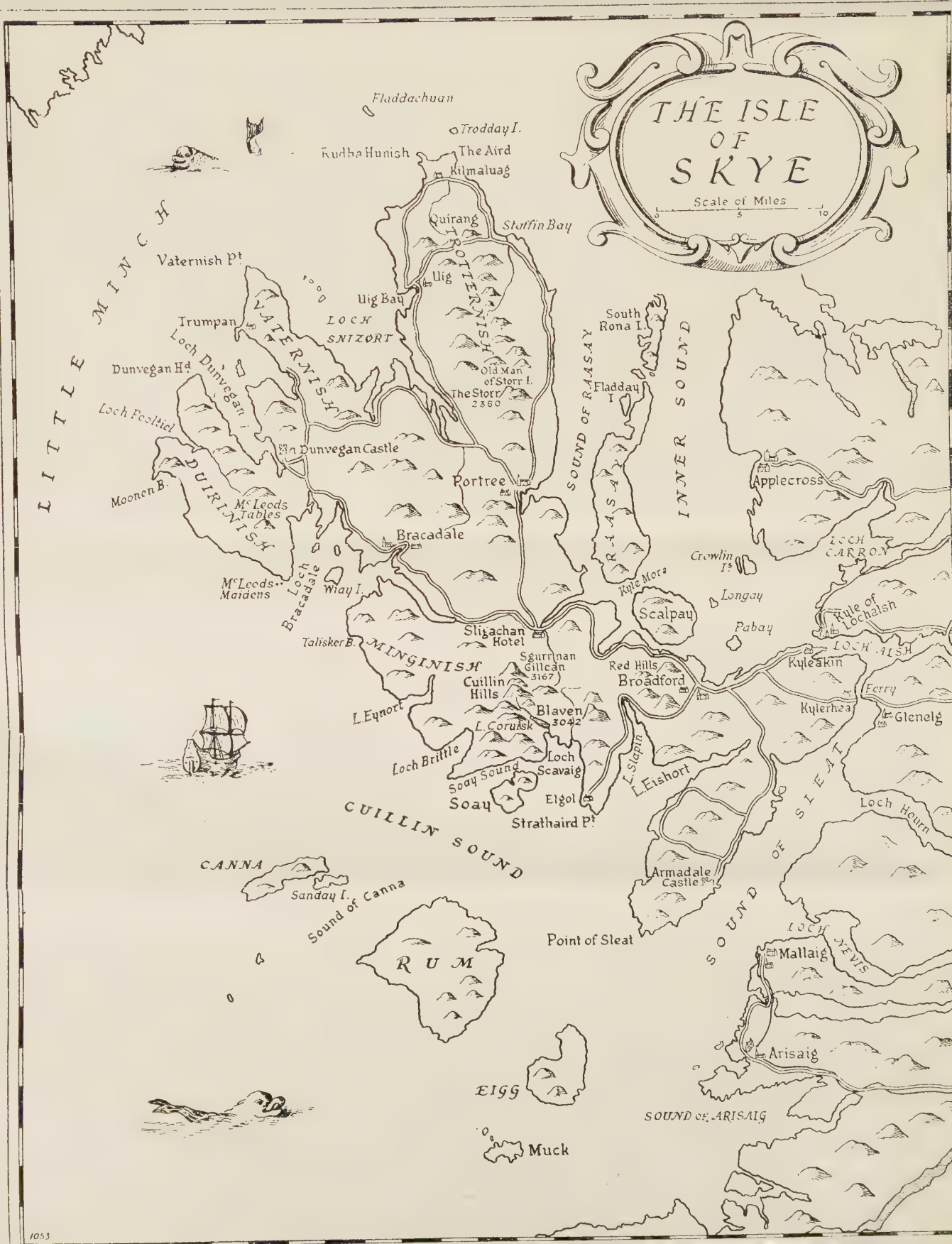
the Atlantic rollers break in spouting and roaring masses. Beyond the promontories of Ardnamurchan are the rounded hills of Moidart, where

> "Ships o' war ha'e just come in
> And landed royal Charlie,"

with the shadowy summit of Ben Mhor in distant Mull peering over them. Farther on the horizon, where the open ocean widens outwards, lie the vague outlines of Coll and Tiree, fifty miles away. And it is almost suddenly that the soft fertile land ceases and the road begins to dip and wind among huge mounds or tors of curious shape. At the foot of the first of these, far below on the shore, among birches and pines, nestles Tormore House with its gardens, into which you may look directly from your giddy elevation ; and on the other side of the tor is a huge bastion of basalt, through which, in bygone ages, the sea has pierced a lofty arch, until now it looks like the eastern gable of an ancient cathedral. Now the land descends steeply to the sea in a series of bulging shoulders, between each of which a burn dashes down a steep ravine to the sea. The road climbs up and down these shoulders, the scene becomes wilder at every step you take ; far above the cliff menaces you, far below the sea swirls and foams among black boulders and in rocky coves. And here, on a sudden, as you turn a corner, you come upon the crofting township of Aird, its huts scattered higgledy-piggledy among the shoulders and ravines, and its little patches of cultivated ground reclaimed from the inhospitable soil betokening a hard fight with nature for bare existence. Mercifully, the harvest of the sea yields a greater abundance to these hardy peasants than the harvest of the land. Wild Highland cattle debate the road with the pilgrim ; shaggy collie dogs rush out with wild barks and are recalled by wilder Gaelic curses ; men, women, and children gaze cautiously from cottage doors at the hardy stranger who has

disturbed their solitudes; it is only five miles to the towers of Armadale, yet you feel yourself in a remote and unknown country. There, before you, as the road abruptly ceases by a brawling torrent rushing below an ivy-covered mass of rock, is a strange scene. A huge foreland, towering upwards to a vast height, its surface presenting the strangest variety of rude disorder and tumbled contours and a hundred fantastic shapes, covered, where the dark rock will allow it a scanty foothold, with decaying heather, forms the peninsula which ends in the jutting Point of Sleat. It is grim and uninviting. Here is Ultima Thule, and the resemblance to Land's End in Cornwall is most striking.

A narrow track between rough boulders and across wet peat-hags traverses the uneven surface, and following its intricacies for a couple of miles through narrow passages amid overhanging bluffs or over the rocky moorland, you come at last upon a prominence and look down upon the most southerly point of Skye. Far below the sea dashes over the weedy reefs; the air is clamorous with the cries of soaring gulls; the strong odour of the brine contests with the earthy scents of the bog-plants; you look far to seaward and a magnificent spectacle greets the eye. Beyond the flat plain of the sea, looking eastwards and southwards, are the retreating hills of Moidart and Ardnamurchan; there follows an unbroken line of gleaming horizon; next comes the island of Eigg, at one side rising gradually from the sea, then presenting a long, flattened top, which ceases in an abrupt and steep declivity at its northern end. In a cave at its southern end occurred that ghastly tragedy of vengeance wreaked on Clan Donald by the Clan MacLeod, when two hundred men, women, and children were suffocated by a fire of turf and bracken kindled at the cavern's mouth. Overlooking the scene of this "ancient tale of wrong" is the sharp nose of the sgurr of Eigg, whose successive strata tell the story of tropical climate, volcanic erup-


THE ISLE OF SKYE
Scale of Miles
0 5 10
Fladdachuan
Trodday I.
Rudha Hunish
The Aird
Kilmaluag
Quirang
Staffin Bay
TROTTERNISH
Vaternish Pt.
Uig
Uig Bay
LOCH SNIZORT
VATERNISH
Trumpan
Loch Dunvegan
Dunvegan Hd.
LITTLE MINCH
Loch Pooltiel
Dunvegan Castle
DUIRINISH
Moonen B.
Mc Leods Tables
Mc Leods Maidens
Loch Bracadale
Wiay I.
Bracadale
Portree
Old Man of Storr I.
The Storr 2360
South Rona I.
Fladday I.
SOUND OF RAASAY
RAASAY
INNER SOUND
Applecross
LOCH CARRON
Crowlin Is
Kyle Mor
Longay
Scalpay
Pabay
Kyle of Lochalsh
LOCH ALSH
Kyleakin
Ferry
Kylerhea
Glenelg
Sligachan Hotel
Talisker B.
MINGINISH
Sgurrnan Gillean 3167
Cuillin Hills
Red Hills
Broadford
L. Eynort
Blaven 3042
L. Coruisk
Loch Brittle
Soay Sound
Loch Scavaig
L. Slapin
L. Eishort
Soay
Elgol
Strathaird Pt.
CUILLIN SOUND
SOUND OF SLEAT
Loch Hourn
CANNA
Sanday I.
Sound of Canna
Armadale Castle
Point of Sleat
LOCH NEVIS
Mallaig
RUM
Arisaig
EIGG
SOUND OF ARISAIG
Muck

tion, engulphing sea, and arctic ice. Then comes another unbroken horizon, and again another island —Rum, with its dark mountains climbing suddenly from the sea, and at its northerly point a glimpse of Canna. Lastly, the remote horizon is closed in by the blue shadows of the Outer Hebrides. There are three crofting families living in this barren solitude, but indeed, though their lot must be a hard one, it must have certain compensations in the extraordinary beauty of the scene which stretches far before them. A calm summer day will repay a month of storms; a glowing sunset the most melancholy day.

Once on a quiet afternoon in December, I reached the last outlying buttress of the Point, and saw such a sunset as words must fail to give even a halting description of. The unruffled sea, on which the changing colours came and went as at the touch of an enchanter's wand, stretched away into the dim distance. Right in front lay Eigg, like a black lustrous jewel set in a frame of luminous molten gold as the sun sank behind it. Among the mountains of Rum, purple shadows rose and fell. On the mainland the tumbled, solid promontories of Ardnamurchan were changed to transparent mists, so light they seemed in the enchanted air. As the golden glory faded, a rich crimson, deepening every moment, spread over the sky, turning the islands to a gorgeous Tyrian purple, and the sea to blood, and giving a rosy flush to the wan clouds and mist-wreaths which hung threateningly over the mountains of Knoydart. Presently great gaps appeared low down in the crimson sky, revealing silvery lines of light, which lasted until the glow of colour faded away before the fall of the night, and the pageant became a memory. Next day, so swift are the changes in these islands, the whole scene—distant mountains, purple islands, and wide ocean—was blotted out in a swirl of mist and rain, while the wind howled eerily among the cliffs and tors, and was answered only by the moan of the tired waves far below.

An open road crosses the moorland from Sleat to Broadford. It runs along the windy seaboard till, at Knock, it turns inland through the scented moors, by many a ferny den, past Loch nan Dubhrachan, haunted (says romantic superstition) by a water-horse or kelpie. It skirts the sea again at Isle Ornsay, which owes its name, like Loch Hourn opposite, to St. Oran of blessed memory, runs through the birch woods of beautiful Duisdale, and then, boldly plunging through miles of heathery moorland, comes down by the wide sweep of Broadford Bay to the sea once more. A few miles above Broadford, close by the Black Lochs, with their hundred tiny islets, covered with juniper bushes, and, in summer, the home of the *Osmunda regalis*, is to be seen a wide landscape of hills and lochs, islands and sea, surrounding the purple moor like a Titanic circular wall with the spectator for its central point. Beyond Broadford the rolling moor is shut in by Raasay, topped by Dun Caan, with the mountains of Ross-shire peeping at you above it, and by the round island of Scalpa, the surf ringing it with white masses of foam. North and south run the bald summits of Glamaig and Ben-na-Cailleach (where the Norse princess sleeps her last sleep), the pyramid of Marsco, and the broken top of Blaaven,—all rising above a lofty upland, beyond which lies the valley of Strath, into which the long grey ridges look down. Then comes a glimpse of the winding Loch Slapin, while more long uplands carry the eye on to Loch Eishort and Isle Ornsay and the Sound of Sleat. On them look down the peaks of the mainland as we saw them from Armadale. The view is finally shut in on the left by the steep hill above Kinloch, birch clad, and seamed all down its face by a single torrent-bed. This wide horizon is not seen at a single glance ; it sweeps around you in a magnificent circle, vast and roomy, and encloses a wide undulating moorland, purple with heather and green with bracken, on which the solemn hills, far and near, look down by night and by day for ever.

CHAPTER IX

A SKYE INDUSTRY

PORTREE boasts a tweed-mill, and Talisker a distillery, but everyone knows how whisky and cloth are made, and until the peat industry is started in Skye it is useless speaking of it. The case is different with the manufacture of diatomite, which goes on in a retired spot on the east side of the Trotternish peninsula, and I shall describe a visit paid to investigate that unique Skye industry with my friend M., the proprietor, and R.

The curious reader will already be asking himself, what is diatomite? It is a clayey substance found at the bottom of certain fresh-water lochs when drained, and, after it has been dried and pulverised, is used for a variety of commercial purposes—covering boilers, making dynamite, as the basis of a tooth-powder—indeed, I firmly believe there is no manufacture in which it is not used. The clayey substance itself is formed of uncounted millions of microscopic siliceous skeletons of certain algæ, which everyone knows as exquisitely beautiful if common objects for the microscope. So much for science, now for the journey.

M.'s launch having failed us, it was necessary to make the journey in a coal vessel which was to carry back a cargo of diatomite to the south. A coal vessel is not the most luxuriant of private yachts, yet when it is a question of getting to your destination or remaining at home altogether, it serves. The whole vessel being used for cargo, there is only standing

room in the stern beside the skipper at the wheel, close by the engine-house, from which a grimy engineer emerges at intervals to breathe. Mingled smells of oil and cooking greet your nose, you encounter every wind that blows, and you may be drenched with spray; but then you see all around you, for there is nothing to obstruct the view. Having made our plans, we started one fine morning in June, with a cool breeze blowing, a clear sky overhead, and amid brilliant sunshine. Beautiful shadows lay on the splintered Coolins; the crofts round the bay slept in the sunshine; and Portree town had scarcely awakened to the business of the day. As we stood beside the skipper (in carpet slippers) he beguiled the way with tales of the craft and wickedness of engineers, for whom he had the utmost sneering contempt—a paltry race, only to be tolerated on his noble vessel. But one of their detested race was marked down for his especial hatred, who, coming on board late at night and extremely happy, had in some drunken, frolicsome mood stoked his furnace with his skipper's clothes.

But, indeed, it required no words of this honest skipper to beguile the way, when there were the leaping Hebridean seas, the basalt cliffs with their green slopes, the panorama of mountains, the purple islands on the horizon, and all the hundred delights of the Western Isles to charm the senses. The cliff wall of the eastern coast of Trotternish, with the ridgy backbone of the peninsula towering above it, now progresses in a long straight line, now recedes into a bay, now sends out some broken escarpment seawards. At intervals, notably at Borreraig, a torrent dashes over the face of the cliff and throws itself downwards into the sea in one mass of foaming water, whose thunderous roar is heard from afar. Or in the oolite strata on which the basalt has overflowed there are dark caves running far inland, chief of them all Prince Charlie's Cave, fern and moss fringed, with gleaming stalactites and curious fossils.

Local legend, emulous of a similar cave at Strathaird, where the chief of Mackinnon entertained the Prince, says that he slept here. Truth compels us to say that the Royal Fugitive only landed near this spot.

Past Holm Island, nestling below the cliffs and famous as a fishing-ground for lythe, the mighty, sheltered precipices of Storr tower beyond the lofty cliff, here appearing like the outlying rampart of this grim central keep. The upper part of the cliff itself is formed of a series of basaltic prisms on a lesser scale than the Kilt Rock farther north, but like it presenting the appearance of a kilt hung out on a flat surface. The black precipices of Storr, though they are a mile and a half from the sea's edge, seem to hang threateningly, so lofty are they, over our noisy craft. They appear like immense cathedral walls and gables, such as De Quincey might have dreamt of, with spires and pinnacles set not above them but in front and around and on their flanks, and at every conceivable angle. And all this weird and fearsome example of nature's architecture is placed on the greenest of green slopes, where sheep are browsing under these spires and precipices as peacefully as in an English meadow.

Just beyond Storr is the farm of Rigg, a green and fertile spot amid these stony sea-walls; and on the shore, a little farther north, lies a huge fallen boulder, through which the ravages of time and the sea-waves have pierced a high archway. From its resemblance to a church with an open door, it is called Eaglais Bhreagach, or the False Church, and near by stands the petrified minister, a pillar of rock, never able to enter his pulpit.

This boulder was the scene of a grisly rite, well known in Celtic folk-lore, but so awful as seldom to be performed—that of Taghairm, or giving the devil his supper. A small sept, the MacQuithens, despised by all men, lived near by, and some of them resolved to perform the ceremony. They caught some cats and roasted them living on a spit. By

and by they found themselves surrounded by cats, yelling like fiends. "Whatever you see or hear, keep the cat turning," said the leader of the Mac-Quithens to him who held the spit. There came a dread silence; another cat had joined the company. Him the leader knocked down with the cross of his sword-hilt, and at once the devil appeared in his proper guise, compelled now to grant whatever the men asked for. But earthly prosperity was not theirs for long; they died, and the devil marked them for his own, and now they are in hell. The leader of the band was the last to die, and was warned of the fate of his comrades. But he was utterly unrepentant, and with much composure announced his intention of joining his companions, saying that if they had "three short swords that would neither break nor bend they would vanquish all the devils in hell and make prisoners of them."

On the cliff above are the remains of Dun Greanan, and rounding a jutting precipice is a little bay, walled round by what seem perpendicular slopes of grass, pierced by a ravine, and guarded on either side by the outlying basaltic cliffs. In this bay, on which the intolerable glory of the June sunshine blazed down, the steamer cast her anchor; and with a hamper of provisions, we made for the shore in a coble which had come to meet us. On the shore and on the slopes above the marks of industry were evident. A drying and grinding factory has been erected at the water's edge; great sheds stand on the upper slopes at a precarious angle; while a miniature railway, the continuation of one which runs inland to the diatomite beds, connects the edge of the cliff with the landing-stage and factory far below.

When we arrived, the work-people were all at the loch, and there was scarce a sign of life round this lonely bay. But presently a long train of men and women began to zigzag down the path on the face of the slope, and transformed this solitude into humming activity. They must get the cargo em-

barked while the tide served. Each one carried a bag of diatomite from the grinding-house to the boat slip, till the coble was piled up with sacks. Then it made a slow journey to the steamer, where the sacks were transferred to the hold. Meanwhile a second coble was a-filling, and so all day long, for there were hundreds and hundreds of sacks to be removed, the work went steadily on. Leaving these busy people and feeling a mere idler, I explored the ravine near by. Like most Skye ravines, its sides are formed of steep rocky scaurs, ending in an amphitheatre of rock over which a foaming band of water falls into a deep basin and then rushes noisily down to the sea, over which, out of this rock recess, the blue hills of Applecross are visible. When my observations, geological, botanical, and picturesque, were completed, I rejoined my companions—M. up to the ears in business with his manager. It was now time for lunch, which we ate *al fresco*, our cheeks fanned by the odorous sea-breeze, our ears greeted by the plangent cries of seabirds, greedy for scraps.

We ascended the zigzag path leisurely until, at its top, the busy workers far below seemed dwarfed to the size of industrious ants. Inland from the cliff's edge lay miles and miles of undulating moorland, backed by the long ridges dipping and rising from Storr to Quiraing, and, just opposite, one bold promontory which overlooks the loch whence the diatomite is taken. This was the landward side. Seawards the water lay like a glassy lake, undisturbed even by a ripple, save where a whale was splashing at the surface far out to sea. Strange to think how, at times and with a northerly wind, this coast becomes one of the most inhospitable in all Scotland! In the sound lie the purple Rona and green Raasay. On the mainland are the Ross-shire mountains—Ben Alligin, Leagach, An Teallach, Scour Ouran and its Six Sisters, and the rest of the many peaks, steeped in haze, but with gleams of reflected light on their

slopes, or golden red as the day advances and evening comes on.

Leaving behind us this gorgeous vision, we made ourselves as comfortable as possible on one of the open trolleys used for transporting the diatomite from the loch. They are propelled along the level ground or up the slopes by strong and willing lads, who jump on board as soon as the car begins to go downhill. That it does with terrific speed; the motion exhilarates and rouses every jaded feeling; you have all the joys of motoring without breaking the rules of the road. For a brake, the poles with which the lads propel the car, pushed through a hole and pressed against one of the wheels, serve admirably. You are jolted horribly, and have to hold on with your teeth, but not for worlds would you lose the joy of motion or the perfume of the moorland air, heavy with aromatic odours, flung in gusts against your face. The last mile or so is uphill, and we took a short cut over the moor to lessen the labours of our drivers.

Under the shadow of Sgurr a Mhadaidh Ruaidh, the Red Fox's Hill, in a silent hollow, lies Loch Cuithir, now mostly drained, leaving a grey mud bottom of diatomite. Men are employed to dig it out, and it is then transferred by girls to open trays of wire netting, set one above another in a staging, so that wind and sun may have free access to dry it. Drying the diatomite is, in fact, the problem of the process, for it is obvious that in a damp climate like that of Skye, the stuff does not lose its moisture in a hurry. M. laughingly offers us a thousand pounds for an expeditious and cheap process. Unfortunately the Germans have been before us, and use a simple and easy method of drying in their diatomite fields. When dry the lumps of clay become light and friable, and turn from dingy grey to white, so that the heather and grass all round the loch is dusty with particles of diatomite. The lumps are then placed in sacks and carried by the trolleys to the

cliff, where they are ground to a fine powder in the mill.

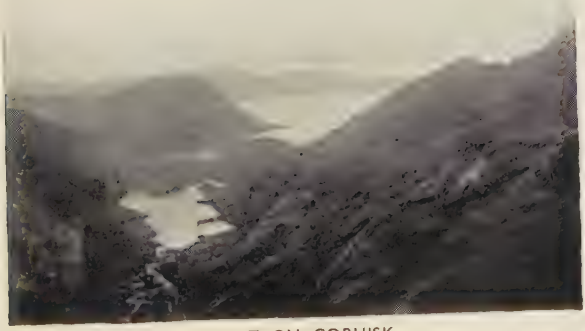
It is a strangely desolate and remote spot in which such an industry should go on ; you are miles from a house, and there is not a sound to break the silence. The eye rests only on the purple moor and the high ridges to the west. But you rejoice to know that this industry gives regular employment to the men and girls of the district, and that since it was begun eighteen years ago, fourteen thousand pounds have been paid in wages and for expenses by the proprietor. Employment is given to about sixty people during the season in preparing the five hundred tons of material annually exported from the loch. Pity that there were not several more such industries for the crofters of Skye to work at, without at the same time taking them away altogether from the work of their crofts. It is too soon yet to say what may be made of the peat beds in Skye, but if ever they are made use of as they are now in Germany and Norway, brighter days may dawn for all classes in the island.

After a leisurely examination of the place and its surroundings we resumed our tramway journey, and were soon flying along at such a pace that in twenty minutes we had covered the distance to the cliff, including time spent in toiling up hills. Once more we came in view of sea, and islands, and far mountains, with the evening lights beginning to colour them. Far below, the string of men and girls were still at their work of carrying the sacks. Diatomite, they say, is good for the complexion, and certainly these girls have delicate skins, charmingly pink and white. Three very hungry men made their way quickly down the cliff to their camping-ground, and, having induced one of the girls aforesaid to boil a kettle, sat down to tea—a peripatetic meal (like most Skye picnics in autumn), because clouds of midges hung round and stung us like fiends till faces and hands ached and itched and were covered with lumps.

By the time the meal was finished and a peaceful

pipe smoked, the workers had done their task. The coble was waiting for us, and, bidding the men and girls good-bye, we made for the steamer, with its hold crammed full of sacks of diatomite. In the growing twilight we steamed down the sound. Far behind us, on the remote horizon, were the lonely Shiant Isles, and in front of us stood eleven of the marvellous peaks of the Coolins and the Red Hills—great opaque masses clear cut against first a crimson and then an opalescent sky as the sun sunk behind the unseen outer islands. After such a glorious day in the open air it was an appropriate ending to sail home over the waveless sea, with such a peaceful prospect around us. The long summer twilight kept off the shadows of the night, and though it was nine o'clock when we reached Portree, it was still light. After much ordering and counter-ordering, the skipper got his boat moored to the mail steamer at the quay, and we bade each other good-night, charmed with the success of the day's outing.

AMONG THE COOLINS



SUNSET ON CORUISK

Looking to Loch Scavaig from Mhadaidh

CHAPTER X

THE MOUNTAINS

"The fountain-pregnant mountains riven
To shapes of wildest anarchy,
By secret fire and midnight storms
That wander round their windy cones."

TENNYSON.

THE Isle of Skye, alone among the isles of the west, boasts fifteen peaks over 3000 feet in height. It is to the existence of the Coolins[1] —a great mass of weird, shattered summits—that Skye owes this proud pre-eminence. The highest peak in the group is Sgurr Alasdair, the south-west pinnacle of which is 3275 feet in height, while the lowest of the fifteen is Bhasteir—to the right of Sgurr-nan-Gillean as seen from Portree, with its curious "tooth" jutting out prominently on one side. Its height is 3020 feet. Sgurr-nan-Gillean, commonly called the highest, is really fifth in the series, sharing the honour with Sgurr-na-Banachdich, both 3167 feet. These fifteen peaks are far from exhausting the summits of the Coolins, but those others, like the neighbouring Red Hills, are all under the 3000 feet limit.

[1] The name "Cuchullin Hills," as the late Sheriff Nicolson pointed out, is due to the guide-books. "The Coolin" is the English equivalent of the Gaelic name A Chuilionn (cf. the Himalaya, the Caucasus), and the older writers, Boswell, Scott, etc., use it so, spelling it Quillin. I have, however, called these mountains by the name which is now popular and known to everyone—the Coolins. They have nothing to do with the Ossianic hero.

It is true that no less a person than Ruskin has depreciated the Coolins, calling them "inferior mountains" in his *Modern Painters*. Ruskin was an authority on mountains, and perhaps, like Wordsworth who thought he had a special monopoly therein, disliked hearing anyone even speak of them. But from whatever point of view the Coolins are looked at, Ruskin's disparaging epithet must be waved aside. The geologist finds in them the most remarkable group of volcanic rocks in Britain. They tax the mountaineer's strength and foot and eye, as much as do the Alps. And to the mere lover of nature they are eternally wonderful. To one who has lived within sight of them for years there can be nothing inferior in them. He sees the lights and shadows on their peaks and sides vary with every hour. In summer sunshine, or on a clear frosty day in winter, every corrie, every pinnacle, every ridge is seen in microscopic detail, and the brilliant light bathes the grey stone masses till they seem to glow again. Or again, when the sky is overcast with clouds after rain, but the evening light is falling in slanting rays upon their flanks, they still stand out boldly. The lower slopes are clothed in vivid green, but above them frown rocky splintered precipices, with their broken tops and innumerable crevices like gashes in their sheer faces. Deep shadows lie in the ravines, but the outstanding masses are ruddy or golden. At dawn or sunset a rosy light streams over them from base to summit, and stains them with every shade of colour from pink to blood red. Or, when a brilliant winter sun shines on the snowy mantle which descends upon them so easily, the massive peaks shimmer away into the opalescent sky and lose all their ruggedness and all their weirdness. Or yet again, on moonlight nights, when the atmosphere is full of pearly, silvery light, they seem to hang like vague, dark curtains against the brilliant heaven. But there are other aspects of the Coolins, when, if more terrible, they are also grander. They are hidden

from view by clouds and mists, until the wind springs up and the wrack of clouds is driven among the peaks, to be torn and shattered by the serrated edges, which emerge black and frowning out of the whirling cloud masses. Indeed, to those who watch them in summer and winter, every conceivable cloud effect is seen among and around their summits—snow-clouds touch them and disappear, leaving them clothed in white; dark rain clouds settle steadily upon them for weeks together, and are lit by wild colours as some stray sun rays touch them at morning or evening; lighter wisps of mist, white as snow, weave themselves in and out of ravines and pinnacles, are dissipated, form again in new shapes, and are again dissolved. Skye without the Coolins would have many attractions, but it would be like the play of *Hamlet* without its hero. With them, it is nature's masterpiece in the Hebrides—a thing of beauty, a joy for ever.

These mountains are unique in Britain. The fifteen great peaks and the many smaller ones stand closely packed together in an area which is little more than six miles long and six miles broad. The broken flanks of each peak are inextricably mingled with those of the surrounding heights. They fit into each other, they rise out of each other, sweeping up skywards as if to breathe more freely; and nature could not get another in if she tried. Two great corries, Harta Corrie and Coire Uisg, with Loch Coruisk[1] at its lower end, run right up into the heart of this mass of mountains, and are separated by the long and massive ridge of Druim-nan-Ramh, which terminates in the high peaks of Bidein Druim-nan-Ramh. In these wild corries silence reigns, and "*an awful hush is felt inaudibly*," save when the tempests boom among the peaks, or a fall of stones, loosened by rain and frost, crashes down some precipice, wakening thundering echoes as they go. Round them the hills with their sphinx-like stony faces are

[1] Coruisk means "the water cauldron,"—*coire*, a corrie or cauldron, and *uisge*, water.

huddled disorderly, each one gazing down upon you, as it seems, half-pityingly, half-threateningly.

The outer summits of this great mountain group are clothed with coarse vegetation up to a certain height. Beyond that they are mere broken faces of stone, made up of precipices gashed with deep ravines, boulder-strewn slopes, jagged pinnacles and crags. Within that outer ring, the desolation is complete. Save for a few rare Alpine plants, or an occasional patch of brilliant green which makes you wonder how it came there, all is sheer rock, black, wrinkled, chaotic, torn and shattered into every conceivable shape. You seem to stand in nature's primeval workshop; here are the very bones of the old earth. And yet these weird mountain masses are the most recent, geologically speaking, of all the British mountains, instead of being the earliest and oldest. Compared with Snowdon they are in their infancy; and dark Lochnagar is a patriarch, hoary with age, who laughs at their comparative inexperience! The lower flanks of all the mountains in the group are more or less smooth, and exhibit those rounded forms which tell of the passage of glaciers over them long ago. They are everywhere marked by grooves and scratches. But higher up the glacier limit is reached, and beyond that the polishing process has stopped, and all is craggy and rough and broken. I have spoken elsewhere of the contrast between the Coolins and the other hill formations of Skye, but it is never so well marked as when you gaze from some peak or ridge into the shattered chaos around you, and then let your eye rest on the smooth domes of the Red Hills across the Sligachan valley to the east, or on the green terraces of the basaltic plateaux which stretch away northwards and eastwards from this mountain region. It is a striking lesson in physiography, which, when once seen, and its causes understood, is never forgotten.

But if the Coolins are the chief wonder of Skye,

Loch Coruisk is the weird gem which lies hidden away in their stony recesses. There are many ways of reaching it. The easiest is to land at Loch Scavaig by the tourist steamer, proceed leisurely over the rocks, and stand wonderingly on the margin of Coruisk for fifteen minutes, while the steamer's solitary gun awakes the thunderous echoes of the mountains. There is nothing romantic in that. Others, more venturesome, come round the cliffs by Camasunary, past the Bad Step, where a false move will precipitate you from the ledge into the sea far below. Or, at the expense of a sum agreed upon, stalwart rowers and a boat may be hired from Camasunary. But the best way by which to let the grandeur of the mountains and the loch be impressed by degrees upon one, is to proceed from Portree by Sligachan. Then every step of the way takes you into a wilder country; the savage mountains draw nearer; at last you walk under their shadow; you penetrate their depths; and for reward, after tough walking and some hard but not dangerous climbing, the strange grandeur of Coruisk breaks full upon your prepared spirit.

The road from Portree to Sligachan, nine miles long, runs through a lonely moorland, by the side of the Varragill river, while the moor mounts up into tablelands whose sides are seamed with many a torrent. From the bridge just beyond the head of Portree Loch, there is not a single house all the way to Sligachan, and you are not likely to meet with any wayfarer. Behind you lie the bay, and the cliffs, and the town with its woods, steeped in sunshine, and far beyond them the great precipices of Storr and the Old Man, diminishing at every step which carries one onward. But in front are the massive Coolins, Sgurr-nan-Gillean[1] dominating the left of the line, and the other peaks tailing away to the right, and all increasing in majesty as you proceed. Soon you are in a region covered with heather-clad hummocks, which give a strange air of loneliness to

[1] The sgurr (Norse *sgor*, a ridge) of the young men.

this lonely road. They are the débris left by one of the glaciers which issued from the mountains. And then, while the road is still winding among these hummocks, it takes a turn, and Glen Sligachan with its surrounding mountains comes fully and suddenly into view.

That lonely glen is always fascinating, in sunshine or by moonlight, or when rain and mist and wind fill the valley and play in and out among the peaks. But when the sky is blue and the sun pours down its beams, and a haze of heat fills the glen, its stern ruggedness is softened. The great hill masses seem less massive; their fissured sides are dimly perceived; soft blue shadows fill their hollows; the snow on their summits glistens and sparkles. The mountains seem asleep, and have less the air of crouching monsters watching for their prey. To the left is the sheer steep front of Glamaig, covered with rocky bosses, like huge warts; then the humpy summits of Beinn Dearg; next a corner of Blaaven's dented crest peers over the shoulders of the pyramidal mass of Marsco as it dips suddenly into the middle of the glen, the upper end of which is blocked in front by the ridge beyond which Coruisk lies. Immediately to the right the great serrated peak of Sgurr-nan-Gillean with its many pinnacles guards the entrance to the glen. The contrast of the rock formations strikes one at this point more than ever. Sgurr-nan-Gillean and Blabhein are black and shattered, because the gabbro of which they are composed has had a tougher fight with the elements, unlike the more yielding greyish-pink granophyre of Glamaig and Beinn Dearg and Marsco, which have an air of cheerfulness compared with the sombre Coolins, and present the form of rounded domes or cones with flowing outlines.

From the inn at Sligachan you look down Loch Sligachan to distant Raasay, and then, leaving the firm highway, you are traversing the boulder-strewn glen by a path rough and ill-defined.

Through the glen rushes the Sligachan river; its waters beautifully clear; the stones of its bed variously coloured and shining like jewels in the sunshine below the limpid water. Every step forward in the glen seems to take one farther from human life and nearer the mysterious recesses of nature's workshop. The way lies among huge boulders—fallen from the heights above or stranded by the glacier that forced its way, ages ago, down this glen,—moss-covered stones, clumps of heather, and stretches of peaty bog. It seems impossible to get rid of the great mass of Sgurr-nan-Gillean. There it is constantly on the right hand, black and frowning, its lower slopes deeply furrowed by ravines and corries, its upper heights shattered and broken, with perhaps an eagle poised above them. You have passed Beinn Dearg and Marsco, which rises like a perpendicular wall on your left, covered with stones and gravel and sand, and still it is there. But at last you are beyond it, and the mouth of Harta Corrie is reached. This corrie runs for a mile and a half into the mountains, until its upper end is barred by a great wall of stone. In the glen, in front of its entrance, are two tiny lochs, infinitely solitary, and beyond it the track grows still more stony, and the sense of solitude increases. Sgurr Dubh dominates the glen to the right, and to the left Blaaven towers up, a single precipice, from the depths of the glen. After some further walking, the ridge is reached and the climb begins. Towards the summit of the ridge you find yourself toiling over absolutely smooth and polished rock, worn by the glacier which once swept over it into Coruisk.

Before reaching the top let us pause and look back. Right in front, a huge wall of black gabbro, with a splintered crest and deeply fissured face, stands Blaaven, with mist curling about and around it. It is over 3000 feet in height, and this front is probably less precipitous than it looks, but from

this point of view it appears one sheer descent, with two lochs and the narrow glen leading to Camasunary at its feet. We have seen the other side of Blaaven from Strathaird, and found it fascinating; this side is equally attractive, and recalls Alexander Smith's eulogy more than ever as you see among its crags "the mist-wreaths perish with heat," and "the wet rock slide with a trickling gleam, right down to the cataract's feet."

From the top of the ridge the three great parts of the scene at once arrest the eye. There is Loch Scavaig opening into the outer sea, and surrounded by the steep spurs of the Coolins. It seems at first to dwarf Coruisk itself, which like a dark gem lies at what seems an interminable depth far below. The ridge slopes down steeply to it, at one place holding in a small basin the tiny Loch a Coire Riabhaich whose waters dash downwards into Coruisk. The waters of Coruisk, itself surrounded by the dark mountains, are black and gloomy, a contrast to the blue waves of Scavaig, and it has with more realism than poetry been aptly compared to a huge ink-pot. The unbroken mountain wall which hems it in, leaves only the narrowest strip of shore covered with boulders and rock-fragments, and though the winds ruffle its surface or the sun glints upon its cheerless waters, it seems like a prisoned creature, dead and helpless, overcome by the mighty giants which have held it there for untold ages. A few tiny islets, heath-clad or with some sparse birch trees struggling for existence, rest on its cold bosom. And then there are the wild hills, thronging each other, their broken crests rising high in air from the ridges which connect their lower sides. These lower flanks, which enclose the loch, are bare, polished precipices, but above them all is rugged and broken. Spires, pinnacles, crags, buttresses, broken battlements, shattered peaks—every variety of mountain form is there, but all of naked rock, black, grisly, uninviting. The eye is led on from one to another,

and wanders in and out of the maze of peaks, each black as Erebus.

It is a scene of utter desolation, as if the elements had just ended their ancient strife and left nothing but chaos and terror behind them. Even on the brightest day this fearful solitude strikes upon the mind with awe: what then must it be in the depths of winter, when the heavens are darkened and the winds roar through the crags, driving the rain in cataract sheets through the glen? Then the vapours sweep and swirl above the loch as in a vast devil's cauldron, and foaming streams dash with hiss and roar down every gully. Far and wide among the peaks crashes the thunder, as if its echoes would never cease, and the lightning flares through mist and cloud along the grisly slopes of the mountains. And then the winds die away; the great banks of mist, some darker, some lighter, roll up the valley; and every precipice and corrie and peak is once more unveiled out of the inky blackness.

Even now as these solemn peaks surround you, and every sound of wind or torrent is dying away to a whisper, they seem to be intently listening to catch your very thoughts. You feel that these great stone giants are living things; you have come upon them unawares and surprised their secret, and what is there to hinder them leaping forth and crushing you? Your heart leaps within you, but reason overcomes emotion, and you remember that, after all, they are only mountains. Yet even when the soul is calmed they speak silently to it with their lesson of vastness and eternal repose. The elements have crashed around them in fury for ages; ice and water and atmosphere have waged war against them, and yet they take no part in it all. They are unmoved. And their very vastness (the vastness, however, of mere matter) speaks of a vastness greater still—the infinity of spirit—the aspiring spirit of man, the eternal Spirit of God. The immensities of nature at once repel and attract the soul of man. Superstitious

terrors, offspring of those long generations when men worshipped what most terrified them, are aroused, but deeper still are the comforting thoughts which come into the mind as it is led on from the work to the Worker. Then the words of the Psalmist are inevitably recalled, and their truth is flashed in upon the soul: "*I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh even from the Lord, who hath made heaven and earth.*"

The descent to the shore of Coruisk is a series of jumps and slides, through heather, breast-high, among boulders, and over ledges of rock. But at last it is accomplished, and you stand by the great boulder near the southern end of the loch, brought there by the last glacier which filled the valley. The waters of the loch dash over the rocks into Loch Scavaig, about an eighth of a mile away. It is at this point that Scott makes the Bruce land with Ronald in the *Lord of the Isles*, and exclaim—

> "A scene so rude, so wild as this,
> Yet so sublime in barrenness,
> Ne'er did my wandering footsteps press
> Where'er I happ'd to roam."

Scott himself landed here; and here, too, all those who have tried to describe the scene with pen or pencil have taken their stand. Dr. MacCulloch's is one of the earliest and most complete;[1] Scott's has all a poet's liberty, and the description in his *Journal* is vivid and exact; Lord Cockburn's is critical, but impressive;[2] Robert Buchanan's is passionate and grand.[3] Yet every description leaves something wanting: all the details are there, but the soul of the scene is still to seek. Only Dante or Shelley could have done it justice. So of all the artists—Thomson, Daniell, Horatio MacCulloch, Turner, MacWhirter, and the rest—Turner has succeeded best in giving the

[1] *Highlands and Western Isles*, iii. 473 *seq.*
[2] *Circuit Journeys*, p. 114.
[3] *The Hebrid Isles*, p. 287.

LOCH CORUISK

spirit of the scene, because he paid no attention to the details, and probably his picture would not be recognised as a representation of Coruisk.

Proceeding along the north shore of the loch, beneath the shadows of the enclosing summits, one is reminded of Dante's journey by the Stygian lake—

> "Far murkier was the wave
> Than sablest grain; and we, in company
> Of the inky waters, journeying by their side;"

as well as of the search for the Water of Life in Sclavonic folk-tales. The seeker had to penetrate a dark mountain gorge until he came to a face of rock barring the way. At certain times it swung into two, and at that moment the hero must boldly plunge in, fill his flask at the fountain which was suddenly revealed, and then dash back ere the clanging rocky gates should close again and shut him in for ever. The mountain mass which appears to bar the end of the loch might pass for the clanging gates, but as one approaches the upper waters, it recedes, and we see that where the leaden waters of the loch end they are fed by a river running through a little green glen, a welcome oasis among these sombre mountains. Looking back, the loch with its islands occupies the foreground with the great stone mass of Sgurr-na-Stri filling the whole horizon. The loch itself is held in the cup formed by the ridge of Druim-nan-Ramh to the left, and Sgurr Dubh to the right. Behind is the great amphitheatre of the watching hills looking down for ever upon this dark corrie and green glen and hidden loch. Here may be seen the remains of a camp, that of the Scottish Mountaineering Club, some of whom lived here for five weeks. What an opportunity for poet, or artist, or dreamer; for, as one of their number says, "to live for five weeks in the heart of Coruisk; to see Ghreadaidh slowly forming out of the gloom of the morning mists; to see, when some storm had passed, the wet slabs of the Coolins glistening in the sunlight; to see, when

the sun had set, shafts of light darting through every cleft on the Banachdich ridge and thrusting golden streamers into the darkness of the corries, and to feel continually the near presence of the immense black peaks that crowded our lonely camp—these, and many other sights that we daily witnessed, it is hardly in the power of words properly to express."[1]

From the head of the loch it is possible to climb or scramble up the Drumhain ridge and descend into Harta Corrie. The way is difficult, unless one hits upon the exact route, but from the top of the ridge the view of the loch is probably the finest possible, with the river feeding it at the head, and, far off, its waters falling into wild Loch Scavaig; and all round, corries and mountains in strange confusion. The great peaks lie around in a semicircle — Sgurr-nan-Eag, Sgurr Dubh, Sgurr Alasdair, Sgurr Mhic Connaich, Sgurr Dearg, Sgurr Banachdich, Sgurr Ghreadaidh, Sgurr Mhadaidh, Druim-nan-Ramh, Bidein Carstael, Bruach-na-Frithe, Sgurr a Bhasteir, and Sgurr-nan-Gillean, taking them in turn from left to right. Blaaven and Marsco and Glamaig, too, are once more visible, and add their number to the surging waves of stone which toss their broken crests on every side, while the mysterious depths of that most barren and fearsome of all corries, Lota Corrie, under the shadow of Sgurr-nan-Gillean, and Harta Corrie at our feet, tempt one to explore them. The descent into the latter should bring one to the famous Bloody Stone, from which the way to Sligachan presents no difficulties. This dark gorge, surrounded by walls of gabbro down which white streams of water gleam and foam in a hundred torrent beds, is a place of dread. The ghosts of the slain haunt it; the fairy folk dance in it, and, if all tales be true, make their elfin bolts of the bones of the dead. Here, where the silence is so sacred that it weighs upon you like a heavy load, a great clan fight was fought,

[1] W. Douglas, in the *Scottish Mountaineering Club Journal*, January 1898.

grim and great, a whole summer day; the blood of Macdonalds and MacLeods ran like water; and round this massive red boulder, named so appropriately, were piled the heaps of the slain. You shudder as you pause by the stone; in fancy the glen rings with the fierce shouts of the clansmen and the shrieks of the dying; you see the eagles at their ghastly feast, —and you hurry away lest some shape of dread should confront you.

Sgurr-nan-Gillean is the most prominent and the best known of all the peaks of the Coolins, and though not the highest, it is the one which most people seek to climb.[1] Looked at from Sligachan, Sgurr-nan-Gillean appears to be one peak or cone, but in reality there are four pinnacles in descending order in front of the highest, but, being all of one dark hue, their individuality is lost except in a profile view, when they stand out clear and distinct. Sporting climbers and Alpine Club-men ascend the peak by the "pinnacle route," though why they should risk life and limb when there is an easier way, is a mystery to a non-climber. Readers, according to their temperament, will judge whether 'tis nobler to break the record (and possibly one's neck) or to seek the picturesque quietly and easily. In general, climbing in the Coolins offers plenty of sport to the professional mountaineer. There are dangerous chimneys, ledges, couloirs, and drops. There are abundance of puzzling obstacles with dizzy precipices beneath them. There are inaccessible peaks and gendarmes, inaccessible to all but a monkey or a skilled mountaineer. The Alps and the Dolomites offer nothing more sporting, if that is what you are seeking. There are no glaciers, it is true, save embryo ones in winter, but there is deep snow in winter and spring, and wind and hail to satisfy the keenest lover of out of doors. There are plently of loose stones to dodge, and these constitute

[1] The highest peak is Sgurr Alasdair (3275 feet); Sgurr-nan-Gillean is 3167 feet.

one of the chief and frequent dangers in the Coolins. Another, and, to those who go without a guide, almost fatal danger, is found in the mists which wrap one round with fearful suddenness, and hide every landmark. One experienced climber slipped over a precipice in mist one August day in 1903; another met the same fate in 1902; and a third some years before. This last victim had left his card in the bottle at the summit of Sgurr-nan-Gillean, telling how he had ascended it "without a guide." He did not return to the inn, and two days after his mangled body was discovered below a precipice near the peak. On the whole, however, the gabbro rock of the Coolin offers a firm foothold, "while the large crystals of augite that weather out in relief from the softer matrix produce a nutmeg-grater-like surface in contact with which the human body may almost defy the laws of gravity." This is the unanimous record of geologists and climbers alike.

But to return to Sgurr-nan-Gillean. With the exception of a narrow ledge near the summit, with precipices on either hand, it may be climbed by anyone with a steady head, but it is safer to ascend with a guide. One girl crossed the ledge with her guide in a mist, not knowing what she had done. She reached the summit; the mist cleared off, and when she returned, fainted at sight of this "brig o' dreid" as expeditiously as any of Jane Austen's heroines. Fortunately for her, the guide, her father, and a friend of the writer's were able to carry her across, else she might have spent the term of her natural life on the summit. The whole climb is toilsome and steep, involving much scrambling, and in some places slipping and sliding among débris, while the ridge aforesaid, broken and stony, must be crossed with care. But there is a magnificent view of the pinnacles as one ascends, and from the narrow summit a wonderful panorama stretches before one. From this dizzy height, with precipices over a thousand feet deep, falling away from it on three

sides, you see the great peaks of the range huddled around and closing up the view southwards. But again you look down into the dark recesses of Lota and Harta corries; you see the long Glen Sligachan, with Blaaven, Marsco, and Glamaig. Northwards the terraced heights of Skye stretch to the Minch, and on the mainland are the hundred peaks of the northern counties, which, if you have time and skill, you may identify one by one. The vast height, the immense tract of country, the brooding silence, are all strangely impressive and solemn. Like one whose soul has left his body to journey through the far depths of space, the world seems to fall away from you, and you feel that you are ascending upwards into the unknown.

After climbing Sgurr-nan-Gillean, the chances are that, having toiled up its sides and seen the wild sea of peaks all around, one will think enough has been done and will be content to have that first magnificent impression remain unaltered by any fresh ones. On the other hand, the temptation may come to a restless spirit to assail other peaks and reach "a height that is higher." Again, therefore, the warning may be uttered—Do nothing without a guide. A local guide will take the unpractised climber by easy routes, where these are available. Still better, perhaps, is it to go with some member of the Scottish Mountaineering Club to whom all the peaks of the Coolins are known,—unless the would-be climber has not a good head, for he will then probably find himself hung up between heaven and earth in a prayerful mood. In any case, he should study the many Coolin articles, photographs, and the magnificent map in the *Journal* of that club, and he will then see what he must expect to overcome or leave undone.

Since Professor Forbes made the first recorded ascent of Sgurr-nan-Gillean in 1836, all the peaks of the Coolins have been climbed, not excepting the Inaccessible Pinnacle on Sgurr Dearg, first conquered by the Messrs. Pilkington in 1880. This pinnacle on

Sgurr Dearg is one of the most striking objects in this striking group of mountains. It stands out from the summit of the mountain, taking different shapes according to the point of view—a chimney-can, a great horn, "a slate stuck vertically into the top of a wall." The pinnacle is a great dyke which runs up the eastern slope of Sgurr Dearg until it reaches the summit, where the softer rock of the mountain having weathered away, it is left jutting into the air—a solitary column of rock. Inaccessible as it looks, this pinnacle may be surmounted by experienced climbers who love to do what no one else has done and to boast thereof for ever after. Apart from the pinnacle, Sgurr Dearg is easily climbed from Glen Brittle, and affords a grand view of Skye with its moors and winding lochs, and of the Outer Isles.

For those who prefer to look at mountain peaks from below rather than from their hoary summits, the walk to Coruisk from Sligachan, and a second walk from Sligachan to Glen Brittle, will suffice. By taking these two journeys, they will have skirted the feet of a group of mountains which have no parallel in Britain, and seen peaks and precipices and corries and crevices enough to satisfy completely their hunger for the sublime. The western spurs of the Coolins, enclosing dark corries, project one by one in a curving line into Glen Brittle. At the north end of the curve is Coire-na-Creiche, its upper part divided into two smaller recesses by a projecting ridge, and guarded north and south by Bruach-na-Frithe and by Sgurr Thuilm respectively. Rounding Sgurr Thuilm, Coire a Ghreadaidh is reached, with Sgurr a Ghreadaidh looking down into its depths. Then comes Coire-na-Banachdich between Sgurr-nan-Gobhar and Sgurr Dearg, and Coire Labain, and beyond these corries is a maze of peaks, of which the cones of Sgurr Alasdair, peering above Sgumain, are the most mysterious and inviting.

In Coire-na-Creiche (Corry of the Spoil) another battle took place between the Macdonalds and

MacLeods in 1601—probably the last of all the great clan fights which had been waged in Skye for centuries past. The chief of the MacLeods, the famous Rory Mor, was absent when Macdonald with his clan invaded his lands. MacLeod's brother, Alexander, collected his clansmen and encamped near this corrie. Next day the Macdonald men arrived, and then began a battle which only ended when the night had fallen. The Macdonalds were victorious, but not without suffering great loss, and they took Alexander and thirty leading men of the MacLeods prisoners. Perhaps had Rory Mor been there in person with his great two-handed sword, the fortunes of the day might have been different. Like Harta Corrie on the eastern side, this corrie on the west has rung with the shouts of war. As if these solitudes were not wild enough in themselves, the wild passions of men have raged among them. But this very wildness has given rise to many superstitious terrors and weird tales. A grisly shape haunts the lonely Coire-nan-Uraisg. The mortal eye which has gazed on this horrid monster with impunity will not quail at the Cave of the Ghost near Coruisk, where sits the spectre of a shepherd, his legs crossed, branding a sheep dripping with gore, which struggles on his knee and utters unearthly cries.

And the Coolins, desolate as they are, have their treasures of gold, like the troll's hoards in the Norse bergs, if the following tale be true. Long ago it was noticed by the good folk of Dunvegan that one of their number was in the habit of leaving home without saying a word to anyone, and remaining away for days together. Then he would return with gold and precious stones, which he sold to those who could afford to buy them. The people believed him a sure victim of the devil, to whom, they said, he had sold himself. One day he returned after a long absence, weary and ill. Stumbling into his cottage, he bade the priest be sent for, and when the

holy man came he told him that the gold he had found had made him a wicked man, and now that he was dying he was afraid. Pressed to tell how he gained the gold, he said that one night he had lost his way among the sgurrs of the Coolins, and, coming upon a cave, had lain down in it to pass the night. Morning came, and he awoke. Then it seemed to him that the walls of the cave were covered with curious marks, which a closer inspection showed to be nuggets of gold and gleaming gems. Trembling, he took as many as he dared, and left the cave. But as he left he saw that an unknown visitor had been there before him. At the entrance of the cave were some human bones and a pair of worn brogues. At sight of them he fled for fear, but cupidity had impelled him to return to the solitudes of the mountain and the mysterious cave more than once. Nothing had molested him, but his spirit had changed and evil had perverted his soul. With the ending of his story the wretched man died, and though many sought from that day for the cave it was never found. The mountains still guard their secret, and perhaps that is why they seem to nod and whisper mysteriously to one another whenever human foot disturbs their ancient solitary reign.[1]

[1] I append the height of some of the peaks :—

Sgurr Alasdair	3275 feet.
Sgurr Dearg	3255 ,,
Sgurr Tearlach	3230 ,,
Sgurr Ghreadaidh	3190 ,,
Sgurr Mhic Coinneach	3180 ,,
Sgurr-nan-Gillean	3167 ,,
Blaaven	3042 ,,
Glamaig	2537 ,,
Marsco	2414 ,,

CHAPTER XI

THE MOORLAND

"I know a stretch of wine-red moor,
The great domed heaven's resplendent floor,
The sun shines o'er it all day long;
There larks trill out their matin song,
While bees respond with droning hum;
But human footsteps rarely come,
Though 'tis a land of all delights,
Sweet scents, rich sounds, and magic lights."

I CAN never wander on the moors of Skye without recalling that passage of Tacitus which describes the aspect of a land made desolate by war. *Vastum ubique silentium; secreti colles; fumantia procul tecta; nemo exploratoribus obvius.* The vast silence, the lonely hill ridges, the lack of wayfarers, are everywhere in evidence, only it is nature's influence, not the desolation of war, which has made them so; while the smoking roof-trees afar off are suggested by the blue peat-reek rising from some shepherd's or crofter's hut. But besides this impression of loneliness which the moorlands give, they have many aspects, which they who drive across them, cursing the slowness of the Skye ponies, can hardly even guess at. But they are there, and greet one according to the season of the year, the hour of day or night, or the state of the weather; and as they have been noted, so will they be found recorded here.

Their most joyous, though far from their most luxurious aspect, is in spring, when the sadness of their sombre winter dress is giving place to a livelier

covering. The fragrant, earthy smell of the moor has returned, and is as welcome as the perfume of the fresh air after long pining in a sickroom. The face of the moor is still dusky, save where it is interspersed with great staring patches of wan, withered grass. But by peering down, one sees the tiny shoots of fresh green grass, and notes that the woody stalks of the bog-myrtle are already in bud. No longer a dripping sponge, the earth of the moors is becoming dry and brown. There are glints of warm sunshine, lighting up the shadowy hollows which, all winter, seemed so desolate. The clouds, too, are higher in the air, and no more oppress the earth with their nearness, while there is a corresponding increase of light shed over the wide landscape. A lark is trying his notes, and a stray bee comes droning past. There is everywhere an air of expectancy, as if some vast door were about to be opened through which the pageant of Spring will pass and dance across the moor like Bacchus and his train.

On the first dry days of spring, moor-fires, lit to burn down the exuberant heather and allow of the growth of fresh pasturage for the sheep, are seen blazing and smoking in all directions. If the day is clear and bright, the rolling clouds of blue smoke, seen from a height, give a curiously unreal effect to the landscape, and fill the air with a delightfully pungent odour. It is strange to come upon one of those fires blazing by itself on the silent moor or the lonely hillside. The flames make a ruddy glow of leaping tongues of fire, travelling from clump to clump of heather, while the pungent smoke rises in dense blue masses swept to the far distance by the breeze. The heather crackles and frizzles and hisses, and there is a dull roar in the air as of subterranean thunder. All over the moor for miles around you see similar canopies of smoke, or at night a red glow of distant fire. There is something demoniac in these leaping flames and smoke columns seen among those vacant solitudes. At night the uplands seem so

many blazing volcanoes, fiery red against the darkness, the flames waxing or waning as the breeze fans them or dies away. The question of the amount of surface which should be burned produces much searching of heart. Crofter and farmer both want as much pasture as they can get; while the landlord, with an eye to sporting tenants, thinks heavily of roasted grouse eggs "shrivelled in a fruitless fire." For the farmer will not greatly mourn if an additional hundred square yards become the prey of the flames. Some sapient ones maintain that the fires are good for the interests of sportsman and farmer alike. Others, no less sapient, are of a different mind. Let the gentle reader decide as it please him!

As the days grow longer and warmer, the moorland folk go out to cut the peats in family parties. A spot is selected by the ground-officer, and from it, for the small payment of half a crown, the crofter may take as much peat as his natural laziness or his foresight (never too keen where hard work is concerned) will permit of. The husband carrying the spade, the wife with provisions for the day, and the children each with a smouldering peat (from which sparks dropping occasionally kindle a chance fire) form a procession and proceed leisurely to the scene of action. Of the smouldering peats a fire is made, with a view to later culinary arrangements, and all set to work. Lifting the upper green turf at the peat-hag and laying it aside, the digger uncovers the black slimy peat underneath. The spade is long and narrow, with a shorter blade set at right angles to the other, so that forcing it downwards into the exposed peat, it cuts out an oblong piece of about a foot in length. These pieces are laid out in rows on the turf, so as to free them from their excessive moisture; afterwards they are stacked in little heaps until the sun has dried them, and they are then ready for use or for storage against the winter. It is a cheerful sight, after traversing miles of lonely moorland, to come upon a place dotted with these little parties. All

stop work to gaze at you, or to shout a kindly greeting in Gaelic or English, and remain gazing after you till you are out of sight and discussing who the chance stranger may be.

Few people realise the importance of these fields of inexhaustible peat to the crofting population in a country so destitute of wood, and to which it is so expensive to bring coal. They, at least, are freed from the shivering terrors of the poor in great cities, for, be the weather as cold and wet as it will, they have abundance of fuel, and the fire on the hearth, like the sacred fire of the Mazdeans, never goes out. The act of "smooring," or (as a Sassenach would call it) laying the fire before retiring to rest, so that it might be found still burning next morning, was formerly a semi-religious ceremony, and, in the Roman Catholic islands, is so still. One way was to spread the embers on the hearth in a circle, which was then divided into three parts, with a small heap in the centre. A peat was then laid along the space between each section, its inner end resting on the central heap. The first was laid down in the name of the God of life, the second in the name of the God of peace, and the third in the name of the God of grace. Sufficient ashes were piled over the whole to lessen without quenching the fire, and a rune was said—

The sacred Three,
To save,
To shield,
To surround,
The hearth,
The house,
The household,
This eve,
This night;
Oh, this eve,
This night,
And every night,
Each single night.
Amen.[1]

[1] Carmichael, *Carmina Gædelica*, i. 236–237.

Spring advances, and the surface of the moor becomes brighter with the light green hues of unfolding bracken and fern, the darker green of grass and heather, and the early flowers of spring. Everywhere the lambs are skipping round their mothers, plaintively calling, and then butting wildly at the maternal fountains, only to dash off again with a hop, skip, and jump, in all the uncontrolled jollity of youth and spring. The air is full of delicious perfumes, and musical with the voices of birds; while overhead the sky is seldom clouded, but brilliant with a rich sapphire colour, rivalled only by the deep azure of the sea, running far inland into the heart of the moorland. Here and there the rising ground on these moors is topped with the ruins of an ancient fort, and from there, as from a coign of vantage, one surveys a wide tract of these upland regions in the clear spring air. For miles and miles it heaves and swells to the far horizon, where a slight haze shimmers in the sunlight. Perhaps down in the valley a babbling brook strays through the heather, or far southwards the jagged Coolins tower grimly into the sky, or to the north Storr upheaves its huge broken face, and the Old Man of Storr stands with mute appeal in front of the black precipice. Save for the bleating of the lambs and the voice of the birds, all is still. You lose touch with your age; the years roll by; it is the eleventh century, and you are an ancient Celt sheltering behind stone walls against the Norse invader. For the natural features of the land cannot have changed much since then; the lower slopes are cultivated, but the shaggy moor remains the same; and on its impassive face you discover no hint of date.

As summer glides on the moors become richer in wildflowers; the air that blows across their surface is more heavily perfumed with their fragrant odours; and, save on rainy days, which will intervene now and then, their loveliness increases. Their rolling surface is too brilliant even to suggest the "pastoral

melancholy" of the same green braes of Yarrow. It is a place for lovers, a place for Pan and the nymphs of glen and meadow; but men and maids appear but seldom, still more seldom a divinity. The oracles are dumb! But on a clear summer day, with the blue sky overspreading all like a soft translucent curtain, the wide spaces of the moor (like some vision of infinite distance) haunt the mind with a strange fascination. Every sense is appealed to. The perfume of the vast earthy surface, of bog-myrtle, of heather and moor flowers, is seductive to smell and taste, as if one smelt the bouquet of a rich wine which was presently to be tasted. There is the strange solitary piping of secret birds, the rushing music of the lark, the hum of bees and of more querulous insects, the noise of unseen waters in some hollow valley, the sighing winds among the bent and heather. The eye rests satisfied on the medley of colour, seas of purple heather, of saffron moor grasses, of green mosses, of russet bracken; soft lights and softer shadows; gleaming cataracts on the far hillsides. Ranges of mountains, in Skye, on the mainland, or in more remote islands, block up the horizon, their retreating peaks giving an inexpressible air of distance, or, where their rounded summits tell of another formation, huddled together like unwieldy cattle.

There follows the rainy season of August and September, of which the less said the better. The sky is murky, the rain falls with a sad persistence, and the moor is a dripping sponge. Yet there are few days when there is no glimpse of blue sky, no possibility of going out of doors. On the heels of that comes the Indian summer, and again the wide spaces of the moor, *pastorum loca vasta*, rejoice and are glad. Over the billowy surface, here flat as a table, there tossed into curious hillocks, or again rising precipitously and showing an outcrop of weather-beaten rock, the renewed harmonies of light and colour appear most rare, most generous. All

A CROFTER'S HOUSE ON THE MOOR (Old Style)

Macleod's Tables in the distance

around save to the west, where, beyond the shining Minch, the peaks of Harris tower in a long line behind a pearly mist, is an amphitheatre of hills, their rounded summits blending gently with the blue sky. To the east is Dun Caan in Raasay, on which the lively Boswell, determined to taste life to the lees, danced a jig. Over these northern slopes a Royal Prince wandered, homeless and fugitive, hunted like a partridge on the mountains. So the unstoried moor joins hands for a brief moment with history! Its tints are more uniform than those of the hills; saffron, light brown, or pale green, as bracken, or heather, or grass, make up the surface, broken in places where a peat-hag lies open, or dotted by chocolate-coloured stacks of peat for winter fuel. But all these colours are made richer by the generous sunlight.

On the hills there is greater variety and much more of a curiously chequered pattern of colours and shadows. Where tiny crofts nestle in a fold of the hill, there are yellow spots of fallow ground and bright green patches where turnips are still growing. But round them are gorgeous russets and browns and reds and purples, streaked by zigzag lines of dark shadow where some torrent has scarred the face of the hill. Just behind is the gleam of a waterfall stealing down the hillside through a birch wood; now hidden, now shining like the glint of light on polished steel. And the birch wood with its rich autumn hues might ravish the soul of an artist as the sun's rays gleam through the tracery of the branches, from which scarce a golden leaf has yet fallen. There is no sign of life in these moorland solitudes, save where some lads are building a peat-stack, and, far off, a group of crofters are moving slowly to the town, walking beside their shaggy ponies with their laden panniers. Their harsh voices, with the curious Gaelic intonation, are borne far across the still moorland.

The upland roads, on either side of which the

ditches were, in summer, a mass of luxuriant flowers, are decked with fringes of fern, some green as in the earlier year, some hanging in rusty-brown festoons where the night-frosts have dried them up for their winter sleep. A leaf flutters gently down from the hazels on the slopes above; a rabbit darts to its cover; a robin flutters lazily with cheerful chirp from branch to branch.

Again follows the sad time of the year, when the grey sky rests on the surrounding hills, and clouds hurry from the south-west, or huddle black and leaden on the horizon. Beneath, the wide spaces of the moor are cheerless and repellent and cold. The peat-hags speak of death in their mournful black recesses; the surface of the moor is wan in its sad colours, with withered heath and bent, though one now and then stumbles upon heath-bells still red but fading fast. The mountains are fierce and threatening, or already white with snow. The rich colours of the Indian summer have gone. Chill frosts have reduced them to cheerlessness, and the moor is more secret and solitary than ever.

And here I shall strike a more intimate and personal note, and describe the aspect of the moors of Skye, with their attendant horizons, as I saw them on the last day of the nineteenth century. The day itself had been calm, scarcely cold; the sky flecked with grey clouds tending to mass themselves together in a fashion prophetic of a coming storm; but beyond them were patches of sapphire sky, while bars of a ruddier hue burned in the west. As one mounts the road above Portree, the wide face of the moor, with its ridges and hollows and gradually rising hills, is seen to perfection. To the left is the wide sweep of Fingal's Seat; to the right the moor rises, now almost imperceptibly, and again suddenly where, towards the north, the Storr ridges come into view. Everywhere, on this winter day, the wan hues of bleached grass and heath were apparent. Patches of a livelier green indicated a crofter's tiny

fields, while darker yellows and chocolate browns spoke of tracts of withered bracken and lichen-covered rocks. On the open moor the shadow of death seemed to brood, where the black peat-hags, with their shiny waters, loomed up in funeral array. All these sad tints and hues blended into one pattern, which seemed to harmonise with the silence which hung around and the solitude inviting to meditation. Toiling upwards and looking back to the town hid by the leafless trees, one saw the pale gleam of the loch, with St. Columba's Isle resting on its glassy surface, and, miles beyond, the great unbroken masses of the Red Hills and of Glamaig, and the shattered crags of Blaaven,

> "Each precipice keen and purple
> Against the yellow sky."

Between the Red Hills and Ben Tianavaig, the sentinel that ever watches the approach to the bay, there was a glimpse of the far-off mountains of Ross-shire, veiled in snow, and, farther to the left, the lonely Dun-Caan of Raasay. Now, having gained the crest of the ridge, a new vista of wide-spreading moorland fell on the eye, while, far beyond the swelling western ridges, the flat tops of Macleod's Tables gave the lie to the assertion that there are no straight lines in nature. Immediately in front, and looking so near that one might almost have cast a stone into its waters, lay Loch Snizort Beg, widening out into the open sea, and showing at its farthest extremity a corner of Loch Greshornish—a tiny silver patch—guarded by its lofty cliffs. Beyond the sound the round purple hills of Harris rose far above the horizon line. Almost while one gazed, the short-lived day died into night. MacLeod's Tables were hidden in a bank of clouds; the Red Hills and Blaaven became indistinct blurred masses as the evening shadows wrapped them round. The great dark hollow of the moor was filled with light, drift-

ing mist, swaying hither and thither as the breeze caught it and swept it onwards. Moaning voices came sounding out of its dim recesses; the wind, suddenly rising, whistled in many keys through the bent and heather, and shrieked wildly down some hidden corrie;

> "vapours rolling down the valleys made
> A lonely scene more lonesome."

Time and the hour peopled, to the imagination, these moorland solitudes with ghosts, until the mist, swirling to and fro, seemed a mighty army of the dying century's dead men and women. A hundred years ago the moor was as it is to-day, save for the roads which cross its wide surface, nor is it likely to change when, within a hundred years, a new century will dawn, and a new army of misty ghosts fleet amidst its shadows till the surging winds scatters them and they are seen no more.

In midwinter, after a heavy snowfall, the moors present themselves in a new aspect. The white monotony of their rolling surface is broken by the tufts of withered grass and heath which emerge, a dirty yellow, from the stainless snow, or by some outstanding boulder, black and grim against the white surface. Towards evening, the hilltops in the distance are lost in banks of leaden clouds, which become darker and more threatening as the night closes in. These white solitudes are tenantless, save for some crofter trudging homewards, and voiceless, save for a collie barking in the distance. There is a gleam of fading light on a sea-loch, stretching its long arm far inland, over which a mountain stands like a dim ghost in the solemn eventide. The hollows of the moor fall away in gloomy shadows from the snow-covered road, which runs, like a long white ribbon, into the far distance.

For miles you may follow it, hearing nothing but the monotonous beat of your horse's hoofs on the

stones. Darker falls the night; more mysterious grows the white-shrouded moor; the clouds close in; a flurry of wind, and you are in the thick of a driving snow blast which shuts out even the shadows of the night, closing you into a deeper darkness, and makes you think eagerly of the chimney-corner. It passes away. Once more the moorland uplands are seen on the horizon; across the sound twinkle the lights of a cottage on the remote mainland. You come to the sea's edge, and hear the beat of the waves on the shingle. A turn of the road, and a township with its cheerful lights is reached, and the steaming horses draw up at the door of the post-office. Then on again into the darkness. A voice comes sounding and hallooing from far behind; the driver pulls up; and a drunken shepherd flings himself into the mail-cart with a shower of Gaelic vocables. The spell of brooding quiet is broken; it is as if you had heard "strains of glad music at a funeral." He addresses you loudly in a tongue you scarcely comprehend; he shouts Gaelic songs, tuneless, in a guttural and raucous voice: how are you to help yourself but by shrugging your shoulders and meditating on the evils of Highland whisky! Suddenly there comes another flurry of wind, in which the fellow's cap disappears. Nothing daunted, he ties a white handkerchief over his head with much fumbling, and is chaffed by the driver for putting up the white flag and being an emissary of "Krooger." At this he flourishes his stick and gesticulates with drunken ardour, and addresses you once more in unintelligible Gaelic.

"Ach!" cries the driver, with that polite apology in which none excels the true Celt, "he will have lost his English with his cap."

"Aye, and his manners too," adds another passenger.

Plunging into an opposite excess of politeness, the shepherd pulls out a big bottle of whisky and offers it all round. Then, making up for refusals, he takes a long pull at it himself, and, with the swiftness of

thought, it takes effect. His Gaelic songs take a deeper colour, and you listen, unwillingly, to a broken stream of poetic erotics. At last, he reaches his destination, tumbles off, rids you of his noisy company, and, once more, the silence of the moor wraps you round. It fringes the edge of the sound, where the waves are lapping round black reefs or dashing on the shingle. The white, wan moorland is suddenly lost in the dark waters, under the shadow of the night. Then you dash through a fragrant pine wood, and suddenly find yourself at home. A cheerful fire of good sea-coal, a welcome meal, await you. Then to bed, to sleep or to lie awake listening to the gusts moaning in the chimney, or to dream of interminable ghostly spaces, through which echo the hoarse cries of a Gaelic shepherd.

CHAPTER XII

THE PAGEANT OF THE SEASONS

"So forth issued the Seasons of the year."—SPENSER.

SKYE has many bad days during the year, days which for wild, unrelenting fury of wind and rain almost baffle description, but there can be no doubt that it has, year in, year out, the best climate in Britain. People cry out at its rain; a picture of the deluge in an art gallery was described to a short-sighted old lady as "a summer day in Skye"; but the truth is that while more rain falls in a given time, there are no more rainy days than in any part of the country where the rainfall is moderate. It is comforting in the Lucretian *suave mari magno* manner to note, on bad days, the worse state of the weather elsewhere as described in the newspaper reports, or to read of wild storms when Skye is enjoying sunshine. The midges, it is true, are worse than the ten plagues of Egypt together, and I am willing to make a present of them to the man who sneers at Skye, provided he takes them all off like a new Pied Piper. But the calm beauty of countless days through the year is unrivalled. It is a mild country, not given to great extremes; health-giving, inspiring; there are clear frosty days in winter of peerless beauty, just as in spring and summer the glory of sunlight and the gorgeous hues of the landscape suggest Italy at its best. But a few impressions, sketched rapidly in various aspects of climate and atmosphere, will best convey the nature of the climate.

I.

Still ailing wind, wilt be appeased or no? For over a week now the storm has raved; the lowering sky has hung like a black banner far down the hillside, while the clouds have scudded persistently through the dim air. The rain has scarcely ceased, but, lashed by the pitiless wind, has driven in sleety blasts through the air, and flung itself against walls and windows. The wind itself has been like a furious madman, bullering and roaring in wild anger, seeming to throw itself bodily against the house till it has shaken it to its very foundations, and then, in baffled fury, moaning eerily in chimney and keyhole, and anon rolling and bellowing, never ceasing its clamour. The hillsides, dimly perceived through sheets of driving rain and mist, are covered with hundreds of foaming torrents rushing madly down their beds. The moor is a mere lake, where what is not black spongy peat is sheer water, while the wind whistles, like some vast Æolian music, through bleached grass and withered bracken. With the fury of the tempest the loch is forced into sympathy. White waves foam wildly on its slate-green surface; the shore is flecked with spongy masses of foam; breakers and spray dash with hiss and splash on the black basaltic boulders which strew the shore; or opposite some funnel in the hills the spindrift is blown along in clouds of white mist. On days like these the shaggy encircling hills and the ghastly hues of the lochs, with the white horses dancing and foaming over them, give an impression of weird desolation and of infinite distance. High up on the edge of a cliff a column of smoke is seen rising for several feet into the air, and then, caught by the wind, is blown back, shattered and broken. But it is not smoke; it is a waterfall, which by the force of the blast is forced high into the air above, and then dashed hither and thither in clouds of spray.

At this time of the year, when everywhere the days are short, in these northern latitudes and in valleys so much shut in by hills it is shorter still, and in these stormy days it is shortest of all. One dresses by candlelight, and breakfasts (none so early either) in a half daylight, while what is called daylight is rapidly retreating by three in the afternoon. But while these stormy winds do blow, and sun and sky are hidden all day long by a waste of clouds, the light is grudging and refuses to be bountiful even within the compass of its brief sway. To go out of doors is to be buffeted beyond all measure, to feel the driving rain on the cheek like needles, to walk through mire and water, and yet withal to taste the joy of the storm, to feel the tang of life, and to be exhilarated by winds that have blown across four thousand miles of unbroken sea and have been suffused with its healthful breath. Yet a little of this boisterous health-giving goes a long way, and one gladly returns home. There, with the curtains drawn, the lamps lit, a cheerful fire burning in the hearth, with books and leisure and cheerful talk, the wind may bellow, the rain beat on the pane, and the floods lift up their voice, they cannot hurt us. Yet one thinks with a shudder of the night and the wild storm raging among the lonely corries of the Coolins, or by the ghostly shores of Coruisk, or round the weird Maidens, and in many another grim Skye solitude.

But all at once in the evening the tempest has fallen, and there has come a great calm and a silence whose "*awful hush is felt inaudibly.*" After this long continuance of crashing, howling winds, of hissing rain and foaming waters, the quiet comes as a sweet relief. No breath of wind stirs; only the noise of the torrents' rush is heard; only the night with its dark curtain holds everything in a hidden silence.

Such is a winter storm in Skye. Reader, would you care to experience it, and know at once its savage melancholy and its boisterous exhilaration?

II.

Snow falls in Skye as it does elsewhere, but there is less of it, and it seldom lies long. A fall of six or seven inches will disappear in a single night with a mild south-west wind laden with rain and moisture. But sometimes, when the whole landscape is shrouded in white, there come magic days when the sun shines warmly out of a cloudless blue sky, when the air is still and marvellously clear, when a pearly light suffuses everything, and a purity and mellow softness unimaginable enwraps the land. The waters of the lochs are without a ripple, and on their glassy surface and in their hidden depths the mountains and the sky are depicted anew. Here and there a black precipitous scaur looms out of the hillside, but the hills themselves in their white dresses are folded softly against the sky, and the snowy peaks of the Coolins shimmer away like some ethereal phantasy into the sapphire heaven. For there is little difference of tint between the glistening snow on their tops and the light sapphire of the sky on which, as on a background, they appear to be painted. It is only overhead that the sky is so intensely blue. Were it not for the shadows cast on the hills by their outstanding rocks and bluffs, they might be fleecy clouds, forming and dispersing and reforming in the dreamy air. Nearer parts of the landscape are strangely near; the farther parts are as strangely remote. The sheep, far up the near hillside, are not dwarfed as at other times; they, with their yellow fleeces, stand out with curious exactness against the white background. A hare scuttles from its form in search of food, hard to get from beneath the snowy surface. The ear catches sounds from hidden and far-off places, so hushed and still is the air. Everywhere there is the dazzling intensity of brilliant light, radiant beauty, purity which is felt rather than seen. And at evening when the red sun sinks beyond the hills of Harris, the white landscape is

bathed in crimson light, which, as it dies off the wide scene, leaves the hills like grey and wan ghosts against the darkening sky.

Often, too, in winter there are quiet grey days when it neither snows nor rains. The sun's rays now and then emerge from the bars of intervening cloud, but most of it is hidden, and these various strata are each a separate plane of light—the nearer, bright and mellow, the farther, dark and shadowy. Then the hills, far and near, stand out prominently; every crag and fissure is plainly seen; and in the varying lights of the upper air, they yield all their colours and tints more readily to the eye. On such a day, calm and still (monotonous, some will call it, but that I cannot), the *genius loci* reveals itself and whispers to the attentive ear the dreams of eld, the secret of the magic song which the sirens sing on the rocks of Eilean a Cheo.

III.

There follows the time of the awakening of nature in spring, when the light increases, the clouds are in full retreat to the higher regions of the atmosphere, and you look forward to a more consistent out-of-doors life. There is a strange opaqueness in the atmosphere on some of these spring days, as if with a heat haze. It resembles the opaqueness which takes place when a few drops of milk are let fall into a glass of water. The winds may still be cold, but the air is soft, and there is a healthy tang of the brown old earth everywhere. The face of the moorland is yet wan, with clumps of dirty brown where the heather is. There are forlorn patches of snow in the folded hollows of the hills, and the withered grass and heath on their sides gives them still a curious streaky appearance, the result of these brown and white-green zigzagging belts of last year's vegetation.

The awakening of nature is almost feline in its

stealthiness, it comes upon you at unexpected moments and in out-of-the-way corners. In that pool there is a constant hubbub and animation, where the frogs are spawning and masses of blobby jelly are half-hidden in the muddy water. On the moor you meet with fresh green stag-moss, stealing up serpent-like through the withered heath. Bright red pointed buds cover the bog-myrtle, and clumps of velvety-green young ferns (*Asplenium*) are seen in the crevices of every dyke and bank. A bumble-bee drones past, with a vivid suggestion of drowsy summer days and perfumed flowers. Overhead copper-coloured and lilac clouds are stretched out in thin strata beneath a sky of palest green.

Of the primroses which cover the cliffs and moors and hillsides and woodlands in April, I can never say enough. They form a yellow carpet; they are of immense size; their number is truly legion; they fill the air with a faint delicious perfume as the afternoon sun strikes full upon them. And scattered everywhere among them are pale windflowers, pink butterburs, yellow celandines, white wild-strawberry blossoms. Hard ferns and polypodys are unfolding themselves. You hear the cuckoo after his long absence, and always with a fresh surprise, as you heard it first long ago in childhood. Chaffinches, robins, thrushes, blackbirds, yellow-hammers, and tomtits are singing all day long; rock-pigeons wheel above the cliffs; jackdaws chatter on the rocks. The days are growing long; the light is more intense; the air mellower.

During May the crosiers of the bracken are peering up through the moss and grass, and gradually rising and unfolding, till innumerable long straight stems with several cross branches erect themselves on moor and hillside. Clumps of milkwort, purple, blue, pink, and white, contest the surface with violets and the pale primrose. Ferns are everywhere uncurling, in stony places, on river edges, on the moor, in the woods, in crannies. There is the stalwart

male fern curving downwards and outwards at the top, like a shepherd's crook, in soft brown curls as it unfolds. There is the slenderer lady-fern in thick masses; here the hard fern with its brown and green fronds side by side; there the polypody, tinted with so soft and tender a green that you regret it will soon lose its softness; tiny woodsias; mountain bucklers, with a fringe of white lace all down the stem; the black maiden-hair peeping out from cracks in the cliff; the holly-fern; the beech-fern; the oak-fern in hidden recesses; and here and there among the limestone down by the sea, the hard sea spleen-wort. Anemones, with their white stars and tender leaves, cover the sides of glen and moor; the air is full of the rich perfume of the bog-myrtle; vetches are found in flower here and there, but their true brilliance comes later. Tiny leaves are unfolding themselves on the barren heather. On wet places in the moorland the starry leaves of the Pinguiculæ are fully formed, and out of their midst the flower stalk crowned with a purple bud is beginning to erect itself. Only in a few favoured places is the flower open and fully formed. It is of a rich purple hue, but if you are lucky you may find the rare yellow variety. There, too, in the marsh are sundews, bright green and red, attracting the swarming insect life, and the curious bog-bean with its trailing stem, fleshy leaves, and its head of pink flowers covered with delicate lace-work. On over-hanging banks is displayed the golden banner of the gorse, making the air faint with its honeyed sweet-ness. How intensely yellow are the cups of the marsh-marigold, flaunting it in ditches by the way-side, and the spheres of the globe-flower on their tall stems! And who would not fancy himself in dream-land as he saw the endless purple mist of the wild hyacinth which carpets every woodland glade, or mingles with the primroses on the slopes?

During this month the life of the seabirds is worth watching as you drift among the islands in your

boat, or, landing, arouse their clamorous cries and indignant shrieks. The terns have not come yet, but eider-ducks, divers, the black-backed, the herring, and the common gull, mergansers, and oyster-catchers have already laid their eggs among the rocks and sea-pinks, and you can hardly walk over the little rocky islands where they build without stepping on their eggs. The scarts prefer to build on high cliffs, where they sit solemnly, their plumage glistening in the sunlight, or for a change bob up and down in companies on the water below. Little care is taken by most of these birds to build a nest: a few wisps of grass, some crumbling, withered twigs —that is all; and on that, or in a hollow of the rock, the eggs are placed, and fall an easy spoil to the collector. Most of the gull's eggs are difficult to see at first, so much do they approximate to the colour of the ground. They are of a dingy brown, with darker spots; the oyster-catcher's are cream-coloured with dark black or brown patches and streaks and zigzags. Mergansers and eider-ducks build more elaborately, and lay three times the number of eggs in their larger nests. Here is an eider-duck sitting on her eggs—a picture of patient maternity. There is her dark head with a yellowish sheen in the sunlight; her back is grey, with brown spots. She will sit quite still while you photograph her a few paces off, but as you approach her she flies off with a whirr to join her mate who is swimming about in the water near by. The nest is a foot in diameter, and its sides are three inches thick. Its basis is withered heather and grass, on which the sides are built up of a thick ring of fluffy grey down, and the whole is carefully placed in a clump of withered bracken so like the mother-bird in colour that you may pass quite close to her and not see her. Close at hand are other two nests, one a grouse's, the other a sandpiper's, with four tiny eggs. And there is the mother running along the ground as if with a broken wing, before she flies off for safety,

A few weeks later, passing this island, you will see the eider-duck with her brood — tiny fluffy balls, swimming on the water and diving out of sight as you approach. But now as you leave the islands, a few seals follow the boat, their grey faces appearing above the surface with a weird humanness. A vivid imagination might easily transform them to mermaids tired of the sea and seeking for a human mate, as they do so often in the folk-tales of the Celt.

June follows when the bracken is already two feet high, filling the air with a richly aromatic perfume. Every foot of ground is rich with colour and covered with abundant flowers. Clumps of sea-pink give a touch of colour to the black rocks at the sea's edge. A little higher there is a richer vegetation—vivid blue milkworts, white stitchworts, white garlic flowers—too beautiful by far for their acrid odours. In shadowy glens great masses of honeysuckle cover the rocks and fill the warm air with odorous perfumes. There, in a shady recess, yellow pimpernels hide their tiny flowers modestly from sight, pink vetch and yellow potentilla trail among the grass; rich golden patches of bird's-foot trefoil meet one at every step; while among the marshy flats, beds of iris, with yellow flowers, wave in the air. How predominant is that key of yellow among the flowers of Skye! The moors are a mere carpet of flowers, brilliant, above all, with the blue veronica, but scores of other flowers are found in rich abundance. Skye roads are edged on either side, for purposes of drainage, with deep ditches, full of vegetation, and brimming with glowing flowers. They are a constant pleasure to the eye of the wayfarer, like the roadside ditches of the flat country around Venice, and seem to form a fringe of gaudy colour to a long ribbon of dingy grey.

These aspects of the landscape continue through July and August, but now the whole country is covered with a royal mantle of rich purple. The heather is in bloom, and the hills and moorlands seem ever steeped in the gorgeous hues of glowing sunsets.

A careful eye observes many tints, pink, crimson, and purple, and there are besides the more vivid colours of the bell-shaped heath (*Erica cinerea*) and the delicate waxen blush of its cross-leaved sister, but the general effect of the moor is that of some vast Titan resting under the folds of his purple cloak. Happy, too, is he who finds the luck-bringing white heather—not so rare, perhaps, as is imagined, when it is looked for carefully; but its influence, like that of most magic herbs, is only powerful to him who comes upon it accidentally.

IV.

Enough has been said of the glowing summer weather in the previous chapter. It remains to describe certain atmospheric effects, and certain aspects of the sunset.

At times in early summer a bluish mist, strangely suggestive in these remote solitudes of the smoke of some populous town, drifts for days down the narrow sea-passages, with a majestic and slow motion, or hangs indefinitely about the hollows of the hills, or folds itself over the edge of the cliffs like snow projecting from the eaves of a house; while, through its semi-transparent shifting mass, reaches of the sea or patches of heath are dimly descried.

The gradual passing away of rainy weather, again, is often accompanied by the phenomenon of a dark heavy curtain of grey mist hanging half-way down the hillsides and blotting out the sky. This fall of mist gives the curious impression of some vast covering which has been let down from the higher reaches of the atmosphere, to cramp and shut in the never very vital energies of the islanders. As it hangs irresolute, now lifting, now dropping, or, where a breath of warm wind touches it on a single hillside, scattering into gleaming wisps of smoke, unaccustomed colours are given to the landscape as the lights shift and change. Here a hill or a cliff

will loom up black as ink, like some vision of the Inferno, and give the onlooker the feeling of being on the edge of some catastrophe and convulsion of nature. There a grassy slope will be changed to indigo, and, near by, an island will be bathed in a glow of vivid purple. But the absolute stillness and peace of such days give the mind a feeling of serenity. Presently the wind has dispersed the canopy of cloud, and the sun shines out on its retreating and broken columns. Then the lights are still more beautiful. Dark shadows make the peaks solemn, but in places the grassy slopes on their flanks are bright and cheerful, like sun-steeped meadows where you might surprise a nymph resting and rejoicing in the thought of summer.

At evening, you will see the pink light on the Coolins changing to a dark purple, till at last that also fades away, until there is only a lustrous saffron sky beyond the dark peaks. The full moon shines out, making a golden gleam on the water. There is a warm glow in the air, not a silvery light, and each crag and spire stands clearly outlined against the luminous background of the sky. Or again, it is a still evening; the water is placid; the green hillsides are moist after days of summer rain; great banks of white mist lie on the tops of the hills, and are lit up by the setting sun. A crimson glow is thrown into their vapoury recesses, till they look like molten brass. The effect is indescribable: the warm light gives the touch of life to the vast slowly moving masses of cold grey mist. Then they resume the grey hues of death as the sun disappears. They move slowly behind the peaks, leaving them also cold and grey against a background of shifting vapour. On one hill only is there a thin shroud of mist, moulding itself to the shape of the summit like a covering of newly fallen snow. Your mind is full of solemn thoughts, and they are set to music, for far off a bagpipe is playing a dirge. It gives place to a lively reel; you are enlivened, and remember that, after all, to-morrow is a new day, and that it is still summer-time in Skye

CHAPTER XIII

THE GEOLOGY OF SKYE

"They say,
The solid earth whereon we tread
In tracts of fluent heat began
And grew to seeming random forms,
The seeming prey of cyclic storms,
Till at the last arose the man."

TENNYSON.

THE whole island of Skye is built upon a series of sedimentary rocks,—gneissose and schistose, and dark red sandstone found in Sleat; various members of the Jurassic series, full of fossils, as in Strathaird and at the base of the long line of cliffs stretching northwards from Loch Sligachan to Staffin. Above these lie the great volcanic series of Skye, produced in the Tertiary age, and forming one of the most interesting group of rocks in Britain.

The earliest rocks are the pre-Cambrian, consisting of Lewisian gneiss, various gneissose and schistose rocks, full of mica flakes and garnets, and the red Torridonian sandstones. They form the peninsula of Sleat, and must once have been covered by the later sedimentary series, as well as by the lava sheets which are so prominent in every other part of the island. These having been removed by denudation, no longer afforded a protecting covering to the secondary strata, which have therefore entirely disappeared. The only exception to this occurs at Ru-Geur, north of the Point of Sleat. There a bed of Poikilitic strata (fine and coarse conglomerates composed of Torridonian sandstone fragments, and

quartzite and limestone pebbles in a matrix full of calcareous matter) is preserved between the Torridonian sandstone and an isolated patch of Tertiary basalts.

The Cambrian series is represented at Ord on the west side of the peninsula of Sleat, and in the district of Strath, by quartzite and limestone beds, much affected by thrusts. At Ord the limestone appears to be destitute of fossils; the beds of fucoid shales which belong to the same system contain Olenellus and other fossils, while the quartzites yield various kinds of worm-burrows or "pipes" (*Scolithus linearis*). In the Strath district the intrusion of the great granophyre masses has caused considerable metamorphism in the limestones, converting it into marble. The fossils in this area are very numerous, at least eighteen species having been discovered.[1]

Red sandstone rocks, lying at the base of the secondary rocks in different parts of Skye, are now identified with members of the Triassic system. They consist mainly of micaceous shaly marls, red and greenish sandstone, and conglomerates largely made up of Torridon sandstone and quartz. They occur at Lussay Bay, notably where the Allt-an-Daraich falls over the face of a rock, below the

[1] These are as follows:—

Archæoscyphia minganensis.
Calathium.
Sponge rods.
Sponge.
Planolites.
Solenopleura.
Orthisina pestinata.
,, striatula.
Orthis.
Euchasma blumenbachia.
Holopea Ophelia.
Ophileta complanata.
Trocholites.
Maclurea crenulata.
Maclurea Emmonsi.
,, Oceana.
,, Peachi.
Murchisonia Adelina.
,, gracilis.
,, (Eunema) pagoda.
Oriostoma Calphurnia.
Pleurotomaria calcifera
Endoceras.
,, (Piloceras) invaginatum.
Orthoceras durinum.
,, mendax.
,, pertineas.*

* See the Geological Survey Report for 1898.

Lower Lias series. The same group of strata occur in Sleat, north-west of Tarskavaig; and again, between the Torridonian sandstones and the overlying bedded basalts, a patch of the same rocks has been discovered in the form of reddish breccia passing upwards into a sandy limestone. Nowhere are these strata very thick, nor have any fossil remains been found in them.

Of much more importance to the geologist are the Jurassic rocks which can be traced in cliff sections or in some of the deep valleys farther inland throughout the region occupied by the plateaux basalts. These strata, once they were exposed, suffered much from denudation, and must eventually have disappeared altogether had not the basaltic lavas overwhelmed them and at the same time protected them from further surface denudation. These Jurassic beds may be best studied on the east coast of Trotternish, where, capped by the Tertiary basalts, they rise far above sea-level. On the west coast of Skye they occur less frequently, and are only exposed to the thickness of a few feet above sea-level, as at Uig and Stein. They are found again in greater thickness on the shores of Loch Slapin and in the district round Broadford. But everywhere they owe their preservation to the fact that they were sealed up by the basaltic lavas which were poured out over their denuded floor, and even in the districts where these have most completely disappeared, their isolated patches are still found to preserve portions of the Jurassic series beneath them.

During the whole period from the Carboniferous to the Cretaceous age, a large part of the Highlands must have been submerged and have formed areas of deposition. The great thickness of the beds of Jurassic rocks—individual members of the series attaining as much as 200 feet—show the length of time necessary for their deposition. Though marine fossils are numerous, many of the fossiliferous

deposits show that estuarine conditions prevailed at recurring intervals in the Jurassic sea. Most of the strata of the series are well represented in Skye, beginning with the Infra-Lias, and ending with the Oxford Clay.

The Infra-Lias series is well represented in the shore-reefs between Lusa and Ob-Breakish, east of Broadford. Immediately below them is a thin bed of Poikilitic strata. Above these are the lower members of the Infra-Lias group—sandstones and limestones with a coral reef formed of *Isastræa Murchisonæ*. These beds, about 20 feet in thickness, contain also casts of *Cardinia concinna* and a few traces of *Ostræa irregularis*. The next series, 150 feet thick, consists of limestones and shales with conglomerate bands. The limestones are made up of masses of *Ostræa irregularis*, while *Ostræa arictis*, a huge *Pinna*, also occur. One of the higher beds is crowded with *Thecosmilia Martini*, forming a true coral reef. Next in the series are beds of coarse white sandstone, containing quartz pebbles, apparently unfossiliferous, and, as the false bedding shows, deposited under estuarine conditions.

The Lower Lias limestones and shales of Skye are frequently of a sandy character, with intercalations of sandstone and quartzose conglomerate devoid of fossils but containing fragments of wood. They must, therefore, have been deposited near an ancient shore line. They are well exposed between Ob-Breakish and Broadford, beginning with a series of beds of black micaceous shales deposited on a limestone floor, and attaining a thickness of 125 feet.[2]

[1] The fossils are abundant, and consist mainly of—

Ammonites Bucklandi.
,, Conybeari.
Pleurotomaria similis.
Gryphæa arcuata.
Unicardium cardioides.
Lima gigantea.
Cardinia Listeri.
Pecten textorius.
Pinna Hartmanni.
Avicula sinemuriensis.
Spiriferina Walcotti.

These beds are continued upwards in a series of the same character, but with fossils of a differing type. *Gryphæa arcuata* occurs, but with a less notably sulcated shell. *Lima gigantea* also assumes a less typical form. Ammonites are abundant, especially *Ammonites semicostatus* and *sauzeanus*. The shales and limestones of the Lower Lias occur in Strathaird, and at the shores of Lochs Slapin and Eishort, but much altered by the intrusion of molten granophyre rocks.

The Middle Lias series in Skye is represented by beds of sandy shales, micaceous, with limestone nodules (Pabba shales), and above them beds of calcareous sandstone, also micaceous. In the lower strata *Ammonites capricornis* and *Jamesoni* are abundant; while *Ammonites spinatus* and *margaritatus*, *Gryphæa gigantea* and *Gryphæa cymbium*, are found in the upper strata, which are usually of great thickness.

The Middle Lias formation is well represented on the east side of the Trotternish coast, especially at Prince Charlie's Cave and in the cliffs of Ben Tianavaig, south of Portree Bay and facing Raasay. Frequently, however, they are hidden by talus and rock falls, as well as broken up by intrusive lavas. The Pabba shales are also exposed on the coast north-west of Corry, near Broadford; but generally round this district, as well as in Strathaird, the Middle Lias series has suffered great metamorphosis as the result of volcanic action, and are changed into quartzites and burnt shales with nearly every trace of fossils obliterated.

The Upper Lias series, made up of finely laminated blue clays, containing argillaceous nodules, and, in some places, pyrites and jet, is found also on the east coast of Skye and in the district of Strath, where, like the Lower and Middle Lias, it has undergone the usual metamorphism. The thickness of the sheets is often difficult to ascertain, becau e of

the slipped masses, talus, and the interruption of the strata by dolerite sills.[1]

In the Lower Oolite group the following series are found:—1. Limestones, made up of shell fragments in which various species of *Brachiopoda* and *Lamellibranchiata* have been found. 2. White sandstones with bands of shale, containing carbonaceous matter and plant remains (Ferns and Cycads). This group is of estuarine origin. 3. Alternate beds of calciferous sandstone and shale, with plant remains, and occasional marine fossils, especially in the upper beds. The fossils are *Belemnites giganteus*, *aalensis*, *Ammonites Humphriesianus Blagdeni* and *coronatus*, etc. 4. Sandy micaceous shales with calciferous sandstones, and occasional beds of shelly limestone. The fossils are all marine, and include *Ammonites Murchisonæ*, *corrugatus*, *lævuscalus*, Belemnites, Brachiopods, and Lamellibranchiates. All these groups are found together in the Trotternish cliffs, especially at Prince Charlie's Cave and opposite Holm Island, and in part at Beal, near Portree, and in the cliffs south of Portree. In the Strathaird district the Lower Oolite series immediately underlies the basaltic sheets, but is again much altered by metamorphosis.

Succeeding the Lower Oolite are members of the Great Estuarine series, consisting of (1) black shales and argillaceous limestone, (2) beds of sandstone containing quartz pebbles, and showing ripple-marks, sun cracks, and worm tracks. *Cypris*, *Cyrena*, *Cyclas*, *Paludina*, *Melania*, *Ostræa Hebridica* occur in the upper beds, and a few casts of *Cyclas*, various imperfect shells and plant-remains in the lower. This series is found, like the Lias and Oolite, on the east side of the Trotternish coast, at Aird and Duntulm, and also inland round the Storr lochs.

[1] In this series the following fossils occur:—

Ammonites communis.	Ammonites elegans.
„ serpentinus.	Belemnites.
„ radians.	Posidonomya Bronni.

The intrusion of Tertiary lavas has altered the sandy beds into quartzite and chert, the limestones into marble, the clays into a brittle material resembling Lydian stone. The beds occur again on the coast at Loch Bay, Vaternish, and at Gob-na-Hoe on the west side of Duirinish, beneath the basalt sheets.

The last member of the Jurassic system found in Skye is the Oxford Clay series. This consists of beds of blue clay or shale containing pyrites and jet, and occasional bands of argillaceous limestone. On the east coast it occurs at great elevation, but, like the other members of the Jurassic series, it dips away towards the west below the sea-level. Capped by the basaltic sheets, it has formed an insecure foundation for these rocks, which have therefore slipped over it in large masses—a circumstance which in part has given rise to the broken masses of Storr and Quiraing. It occurs notably at Staffin, and can be traced at Duntulm, and Monkstadt, and at Uig Bay. These beds of Oxford Clay are believed to have extended over the whole British area and to have been deposited in a sea of great depth.

The characteristic physiographical features of Skye are not derived from these earlier rocks, interesting as they are, but from the later volcanic series of the Tertiary period. These divide themselves roughly into three classes: (1) the plateaux basalts; (2) the gabbro rocks; (3) the granophyre rocks. Ages of denudation have altered these, but they still preserve their characteristic forms, and are well seen in the terraced tablelands of northern Skye, the jagged Coolins, and the rounded Red Hills respectively.

At the beginning of the Tertiary period it cannot be supposed that Skye was a separate island. It must have formed part of one continuous tract of country with the mainland and the group of the Inner Hebrides, if that tract did not extend even farther towards Antrim. The Jurassic strata of the island had suffered much denudation, and had been removed altogether from what is now the district of

Sleat, laying bare the Torridonian sandstone and gneissose rocks. Over the whole district of the British Isles there had been a cessation of volcanic activity since the last outbreak of Permian time. The long ages of the Mesozoic period had come and gone, and as no trace remains in its rocks of any eruption, we must suppose that it was a time of volcanic rest. With the dawn of the Tertiary age volcanic activity again set in on a gigantic scale, over a district embracing forty thousand square miles, and including such widely separated places as the Faroe Islands, the Inner Hebrides, and Antrim in the north-east of Ireland. This volcanic activity lasted for a long period, with many intervals of quiescence followed by times of renewed activity on a greater or less scale. Thus the plateaux basalts have been laid down in successive sheets with long intervals between, as is proved from their appearance and from the sedimentary materials and even animal and plant remains found between them. Again, the gabbro of the Coolins represents a new period of activity, when vast masses of molten rock were upheaved and intruded among the basalt sheets. A similar subterranean upflow which also never reached the surface, gave rise to what are now the Red Hills. What are known as "sills"—sheets of molten rock injected between successive planes of other rock—intruded themselves among the basaltic sheets, or between them and the Jurassic strata below. Finally, during the whole period volcanic activity gave rise to a great system of dykes, which break through not only the earlier plateaux basalts, but also the gabbros and the granophyres of the Coolins and the Red Hills, proving that the upheaval of the acid granophyres was not the last phenomenon of the Tertiary volcanic system. Some of these dykes never reached the surface; others probably did. But, as we shall see, the plateaux basalts took their origin from just such fissure eruptions on a more gigantic scale than that exemplified in the dykes.

I shall take each of these kinds of Tertiary volcanic activity in turn, and, after showing how the Isle of Skye was affected by them, shall point out the remarkable physiographical differences to which they have given rise throughout the island.

1. *The Plateaux Basalts.*

The plateaux basalts of Skye are only part of a volcanic series of which we have traces from Antrim to Iceland, where indeed similar volcanic activity to that which produced these plateaux still goes on. North of a line drawn from Loch Eynort to Loch Sligachan, nothing is more striking than the similarity of the land structure. Along great parts of the coast, lofty cliffs, often 1000 feet high, are piled up in a series of parallel bands. In the glens and valleys this parallel structure is again seen, and it is also most marked in the uplands, whose green terraces with outstanding layers of grey rock show that the lavas were laid down in successive sheets. Where these uplands mount up into high hills, like MacLeod's Tables (1600 feet high), their sloping sides exhibit that structure admirably, while their flattened tops give evidence of the surface level of one of these horizontal sheets. Of how many others have been removed from these lofty summits nothing remains to tell. In the Trotternish district the basaltic sheets stand above the eastern seaboard in a long ridge over 2000 feet high, with an abrupt face formed of parallel bands. On the westward side they dip in long grassy slopes to the horizon, but in these slopes the parallel band formation is occasionally seen in a long outcrop of rock amidst the verdure. Even from a long way off the banded structure of the eastward precipitous face is plainly seen. After a light fall of snow the precipice of Storr shows long bands of black rock with lines of white between, where the snow has rested in grooves or on cornices between the successive sheets.

The origin of these basaltic plateaux is to be found, not in outpouring of lava from vast volcanic cones on a scale greater than that of Vesuvius or Etna,[1] but in a tranquil outflow from great fissures opened in the underlying rocks and communicating with the mighty reservoirs of molten magma beneath. The lavas welled upwards and outwards on all sides over the surface of the land. That surface, in Skye, was mainly of the Jurassic age, for on the east and west coasts the basalt sheets are seen to overlie it immediately, though towards Sleat, as at Loch Scavaig, all the intervening strata had been removed and left the Red Torridonian sandstone to be covered immediately with lava. The lava, as it flowed out, filled valleys and circled first round and then over the lesser slopes. As new fissures were opened and new outflows took place during the period, new beds were laid down, until all underlying rocks were covered, and a flat surface formed. That surface extended far beyond the limits of the present island, and probably was connected with similar lava sheets found in the adjacent islands. The abrupt precipitous face of the coast cliffs shows that the sheets of basalt have been reduced to an inconceivable extent during the course of ages.

The length of time which intervened between the outflow of the successive sheets is well seen by the fact that they enclose beds of clay and shale and sand, containing leaves of plants, pieces of fossil wood, and even wing-cases of beetles. In certain places seams of lignite and even of coal have been formed, as at Camas-ban, near Portree; at Scoribreck, Talisker, Loch Greshornish, and at An Ceannaich, south of Dunvegan Head. Five or six hundred tons of coal are said to have been obtained at Portree. The existence of these sedimentary

[1] This is Professor Judd's theory, and in his view the Red Hills and the Coolins represent the roots of the vast volcano from which the basalts were ejected. See *Quarterly Journal of the Geological Society*, vol. xxx. p. 233 *seq.*

deposits and vegetable remains suggests that rivers ran over the basalt sheets, soil was formed, and vegetation flourished. Then that pleasant landscape was overwhelmed by a new outflow which, when it consolidated, formed a new land surface, to be in turn buried beneath later molten sheets.

Evidence exists to show that during the whole period volcanic vents also pierced the surface of the ground and threw out molten matter. Some of these may have existed before the plateaux basalts issued from their fissures ; some were formed in these consolidated sheets themselves ; but of others it may be concluded that, like the cones of Iceland, they arose in connection with the fissure disturbances. These vents are now filled with broken fragments of rock or agglomerate. A great mass of agglomerate in the valley of Strath between Loch Kilchriosd and Beinn Dearg Beg, covering an area of several square miles, points to the existence of one or more vents of volcanic discharge in that region. Others exist near this district, greatly reduced owing to the intrusion of the Coolins and Red Hills among them. An excellent opportunity for examining such an ancient vent is offered at Camas Garbh, on the south side of Portree Bay.

2. *The Sills.*

When the plateaux basalts had been finally laid down, they must have attained a thickness of not less than 3000 feet. Even now some of the ruins of this plateau, which extended not only over its present area, but over the mountainous belt and into the peninsula of Sleat (where only the merest traces of it remain), are over 2000 feet in height. Probably after this period a new outburst of volcanic activity, confined underground, however, gave rise to the "sills" or intrusive sheets which are found throughout the whole region covered by the basaltic sheets, but nowhere more prominently than in Skye.

We are to conceive an enormous mass of molten material being forced upwards from the depths of the earth. But it cannot get egress to the surface for lack of a vent and on account of the greater resisting force of the surface crust. It therefore seeks the lines of least resistance, and finds these between the basaltic sheets and the underlying strata which these cover, and with inconceivable uplifting power raises these sheets from their foundation and intrudes in thicker or thinner masses far and wide between them, and then solidifies. One such intrusive sheet may be traced from the Shiant Isles in the north of Skye, all down the Trotternish coast to Loch Sligachan—a distance of over forty miles; while it is possible that once it ran continuously southwards to Eigg and Mull, where a similar sheet appears,—in all a distance of over a hundred miles. In the Trotternish district this sill is now laid bare, and remains as the lofty escarpment of steep cliffs which, based on the Jurassic strata here also visible, form a vast wall of frowning precipices northwards from Loch Sligachan to Staffin. The overlying basalt sheets have been denuded from the intrusive sill, and cut backwards to the massive ridge in which the precipices of Storr and Quiraing occur. Nothing can be more impressive than this coast-line seen from the sea. At the base extend the yellow stratified sandstone rocks; above them are the dark mural escarpments which the sill has formed. They are hundreds of feet thick, and for the most part have solidified into a prismatic structure, seen notably at the famous Kilt Rock, resembling the basaltic pillars of Staffa. Over this marvellous rock face great waterfalls dash seawards from the moorland which stretches backwards from its edge, while at the distance of a mile or more inland, and mainly following the course of the coast-line, is the massive ridge—the ruins of the basaltic sheets which once covered this exposed face of sill, and stretched out far seawards.

The force necessary to inject this thick intrusive

sheet of molten lava underneath the vast series of basaltic sheets is inconceivable, yet the evidence of it is undeniable. In some cases, however, the intrusive layers have been injected in thin sheets between the Jurassic sandstones themselves, or into the shales which occur between the basaltic sheets. Thus in the shales at Ach-na-Hannait, south of Portree, as many as twelve thin sills from 1 to 4 inches thick are found between the layers of shale here about 3 feet in height. Similarly, veins and dykes have forced their way into the basalts from the intrusive sheets. All down the west coast of Skye, wherever the junction of the plateaux basalts and the Jurassic strata or Torridonian sandstones has been laid bare, similar sills are found, either as thick or thin sheets, and accompanied with the usual phenomena of dykes.

The lavas which compose the plateaux and the sills are mainly basalts, dolerites, andesites, and trachytes, but they have consolidated in various forms. Sometimes columnar prismatic basalts occur, as at the Kilt Rock ; mostly the formation is in sheets of coarse crystalline rock, more or less jointed ; elsewhere there are amygdaloidal beds, full of vesicles containing mineral matter. Such beds tend to decay into mere débris, and have always an amorphous appearance, which contrasts vividly with the more crystalline and prismatic layers. This contrast is well marked in the successive sheets in the highest of the three MacLeod's Maidens off Loch Bracadale. In some instances, due to the texture of the lavas, they assume a stratified form, resembling that of sedimentary rocks.

3. *The Gabbro Area.*

This area is confined to the Coolin Hills, the weirdest mountain group in Britain. They are mainly composed of gabbro—a basic rock, coarsely grained, though occasionally of a banded structure—or of dolerite. This curiously isolated group of

THE COOLINS FROM THE HEAD OF LOCH SCAVAIG

peaks, angular, shattered, spiry, and precipitous, is the result of the upheaval and intrusion of molten lavas into the overlying basaltic beds during the Tertiary epoch. From several pipes or vents still buried far underground, the igneous material was shot up among the basaltic sheets in a series of mighty masses. These, though they could not reach the surface, must have upheaved the basalts into a great dome, and have been injected among the sheets themselves all around. After solidifying, and when this series of underground upheavals was at an end, we are to imagine a great core of gabbro beneath the dome of basalt, with sheets extending outwards from it in all directions into the basaltic layers.

How thick the plateaux basalts may have been in this district it is now impossible to say. But they have been completely stripped off the underlying core, which also, after suffering extensive denudation, has been left as the shattered and splintered group of the Coolins. Wherever the lower basaltic beds approach these hills, they are found to be interbanded with gabbro and dolerite—remnants of the intrusive sheets just referred to. But the structure of the hills themselves, the evidence of protrusion of molten matter among them, the existence of veins and dykes, prove that they did not result from one isolated upheaval, but from a continuous series over a long period of time. The region, as is proved by the Red Hills near by, similarly formed, was a weak spot on the earth's crust, and its lower portions were easily disrupted by the molten magma underneath. Similar upheavals of gabbro took place in Rum, Mull, and Ardnamurchan, where the work of denudation has also left them in their characteristic forms among the surrounding hills.

4. *The Granophyre Area.*

At some period after the gabbro masses had been upheaved into the plateaux basalts, a new series of

volcanic outbreaks occurred beneath the basaltic sheets which lay east and south-east of the region now occupied by the Coolins. From different channels or pipes, and at different intervals, masses or bosses of acid rock were protruded into the overlying rocks and among the gabbros, but, like the gabbro masses, never reached the surface. These molten acid rocks took the form of solid bosses of greater or less mass, but they are found also as sills and veins underneath and throughout the sedimentary strata, the basalts, and the gabbros in the surrounding districts. These bosses exist now as the Red Hills, and their extent and size, like those of the neighbouring Coolin Hills, prove the magnitude and force of the internal upheavals which produced them.

The Red Hills proper lie in a group between Broadford and Loch Ainort. Blaaven and its outliers belonging to the gabbro series, separate them from the chain of similar hills which, consisting of the peaks of Glamaig, Beinn Dearg, and Marsco, run southwards from Loch Sligachan towards the Coolins. In form and colour they exhibit a striking contrast to these splintered masses of dark rock so near them. Besides the groups of peaks, lesser masses of similar shape are found around them, some of quite small size, but all belonging to the same volcanic series.

As in the case of the Coolins, the complete denudation of the overlying plateaux basalts has left these curious cones and pyramidal masses, with their steep, straight sides. The worn aspect of these sides and their lines of screes show that they, too, have suffered denudation, but yet possibly on such a regular scale as, while reducing the separate bosses in size, to leave them in much the same form as that in which they were protruded and solidified. The removal of the basalt sheets around the granophyre masses has been more complete on the southern side than elsewhere, leaving exposed the Cambrian limestone, the Jurassic sandstones and shales. The isolated granophyre mass of Beinn-an-Dubhaich,

SGURR DEARG AND SGURR ALASDAIR

MARSCO FROM ALLT DEARG

south of Torran, rises directly out of the Cambrian limestone of the district which is seen around its sides. It also forms an interesting example of the metamorphism caused in the surrounding rocks by masses of molten rock being forced through them, for it has changed the limestone into marble of a workable quality.[1] Such isolated masses also prove that the granophyre extends beneath the surface far beyond the actual area visible. The basalt sheets are found around Glamaig, Beinn-na-Cailleach, Beinn-na-Cro, and other peaks, abutting against their lower slopes, and altered in form by the contact with these later molten protrusions. The junction of the granophyre and gabbro rocks is often plainly marked, but in certain cases the gabbro overlies the granophyre in such a way as to have led observers to suppose that it is the later of the two. Professor Archibald Geikie's careful investigations may be said to have set the matter at rest, and to have proved the later date of the granophyre rocks.

Sills of acid rock are found in such positions as show that they, like the dolerite sills, sought the lines of least resistance, and were intruded at the base of the plateaux basalts. One such sill is seen beginning near Suishnish on Loch Eishort, and running for about five miles in a long line towards Skulamus. The same sheet reappears in Scalpa, and in Raasay. Veins and dykes of acid rock belonging to the same eruptive series occur both in the basalts and gabbros. Sometimes they are seen, as it were, escaping from a neighbouring boss of granophyre and protruding into a mass of basic rock. Or, again, their connection with the parent mass is nowhere visible.

The rocks of which these acid bosses are composed may be roughly described as granophyre, which

[1] The marble is found near Kilchrist manse, and was quarried within recent years. Some beautiful slabs of it were used for the interior decoration of Armadale Castle. The high altar of Iona Cathedral is said to have been made of this stone.

resembles granite in form and composition. True granites occasionally occur, as well as occasional felsites. The general aspect of the rocks, their rounded forms, their pink and yellow colours, separate them clearly from the other rock masses of the island, and give them an isolated appearance which only makes them the more striking under whatever conditions they may be seen.

5. *Veins and Dykes.*

It has been seen that the basaltic plateaux were formed by the welling up of molten matter from great fissures formed in the earth's crust. Such fissures are now buried deep below the plateaux, or the evidence of them has been removed by denudation. But traces of phenomena of a similar character still exist in the system of dykes by which the whole area of Britain was traversed during the Tertiary age.

A dyke is a wall-like mass of solidified lava rising up through earlier rocks. It may be of varying length and thickness; sometimes when it is composed of harder material, than the rocks through which it rose, it projects like a ruined wall from the escarpments and corries; again, where it has been of softer material, it has been eaten away, and has left a fissure opening between walls of solid rock. This latter form is well illustrated in the stratified cliffs of Loch Slapin in Skye.

Outside Skye and the Hebrides generally isolated dykes of great length and thickness are found, but in Skye several dykes, short and narrow, with a parallel direction usually occur together. They rise up through all the underlying strata, to the highest levels of the plateaux basalts; in the highest cliffs running south from Dunvegan Head they may be traced continuously from top to bottom—a height of 1000 feet. They occur in the gabbro masses of the Coolins and the granophyres of the Red Hills,

and may be followed in certain cases from the recesses of the lowest glens up to the summit of the shattered peaks—a known vertical extension of over 3000 feet.

The origin of this vast series of dykes can only be found in the protracted formation of vertical fissures in the earth's crust as the result of enormous horizontal tension, followed by the filling of these fissures with molten lava from the great reservoir which must have existed below the whole area in which these dykes occur. It existed at a depth of at least three miles, and here again we are amazed at the enormous force necessary to produce a series of regular cracks in solid rocks of such thickness and of such wide variety. The lava which uprose in these fissures must have now and then reached the surface and flowed outwards, as in the case of the plateaux basalts ; sometimes it is seen to have given rise to sills ; at other times its termination upwards is distinctly seen in the overlying rock-masses. But what is undoubtedly proved is that the system of dykes did not originate in one disturbance but in many. Dykes had been formed before the gabbros and granophyres were upheaved ; and they were formed long after these had solidified. The proof of this is strikingly exhibited when one dyke is seen to cross another, or even two others as at Harrabol, a little to the east of Broadford ; or when a dyke-fissure has been reopened and a fresh intrusion of lava has occurred alongside of the earlier. Many of these exist in Strathaird. Still another proof is found in the fact that a dyke of basic rock has itself been split by and encloses a later dyke of granophyre, or two parallel basic dykes have similarly been disrupted by a band of acid rock. At Corry, and near the market stance at Broadford, examples of these types are to be found.

The general direction of the dykes in Skye and over the whole British area is north-westerly, though a more directly north and south trend is not

infrequently met with in Skye. In general, too, the fissure walls descend vertically through the crust, only occasionally deviating from the perpendicular. Of the basic dykes the chief constituents are basalt, dolerite, and andesite, those of later date containing porphyry. Many of the latest dykes are found to include fragments of the gabbros and granophyres derived from the rocks in which the fissures were formed. As a result of cooling within a constricted area, the margins of a dyke are of a finer crystalline grain (sometimes even glassy) than the coarser central part. Acid dykes of granophyre, felsite, or rhyolite usually occur near the granophyre masses, but are also found in cases at some considerable distance from them. The weathering of the dykes is usually greater or less than the rocks which enclose them, as these are harder or softer than they. They show as long narrow clefts in the harder gabbro of the Coolins, or stand out as prominent dark bands on the sides and crests of the softer granophyres.

Even while the series of eruptions were in progress the work of erosion had set in—rivers cutting their way across the plateaux, and the Atlantic rollers shattering their seaward edges. But its chief manifestations were due to agencies at work at the close of the long chain of volcanic outbursts. The overlying sheets of basalt have been removed from the Coolins and Red Hills, and they also have been wrought upon and carved and reduced. Again, glens and valleys several miles long, sometimes two or three in breadth, and not infrequently over 2000 feet in depth, have been hollowed out of the plateaux. The sea covers an unknown extent of the lower series of the plateaux, whose edges, disrupted and broken, have been eaten back and now face its waters as frowning escarpments.

The time involved in working such mighty changes has been calculated by Professor Archibald Geikie to be not less than twelve millions of years. Its causes must be sought not only in the ceaseless work of

chemical disintegration, but in the grinding force of the vast ice-fields which covered the whole region during the glacial age, in the erosive power of the rivers which flowed across it, in the subsidence of the land for several hundreds of feet below the present level, and in the ceaseless action of the waves then and ever since. All these have cut down the surface and made the island of Skye what it now is. Everywhere there are deep glens and lofty ridges where once there was a more or less level surface. The rocks show the plain marks of ice-action in scratches and furrows, and the raised sea-beach near Kyleakin shows how the land subsided and was again elevated. The rivers which flow through glens and valleys, the burns which course down their sides, are those which, during those long ages, have carried on this gigantic work of destruction. The sea-waves aided by rain and frost are still shattering the cliffs and promontories, and great falls of rock from their faces no less than the silent and unseen process of denudation, bear witness even now to the fact that the plateaux are still being diminished.

During the glacial period the great ice-sheets moved across Skye eastwards and south-eastwards, leaving boulders in the valleys and covering the hillsides with abundant striæ. In the Coolin region glaciers arose independently of the main ice-sheets, and moved in various directions, according to the trend of the valleys of the district. One ice-stream, issuing from Harta Corrie, divided, part going northwards towards Portree, part southwards, over Druim-an-Eidhne and along the eastern side of Coire Riabhach. Another ice-sheet, issuing from the hills round Marsco, also turned northwards and southwards, each part joining with the subdivisions of the other. The north-going glacier spread out in fan shape at Sligachan. On the left it joined with smaller glaciers from Coir-a-'Bhasteir and Fionn Coire, and crossing the ridge north of Bruach-na-Frithe, flowed

into Glen Brittle. The main part of this north-moving ice-sheet moved onwards over the moor, and then sent two glaciers at right angles, one into the Drynoch valley, the other into Glen Varragill, towards Portree. Loch Sligachan was probably blocked by the main ice-sheet from the mainland, hence this deflection. The moorland at the junction of Glens Sligachan, Drynoch, and Varragill is covered with hummocky drift or "kettle moraines" in large numbers, full of boulders and smaller débris, and covering the ground with a confused series of little hillocks from 10 to 60 feet in height. These represent the material thrown down by stranded portions of glaciers cut off from their main supply and left to melt *in situ*.[1]

The southward moving glacier filled the Camasunary valley, reaching to nearly the top of Blaaven and covering the lower heights on the right hand, which are smooth and polished as a result. Part of this glacier passed over the ridge into Coruisk, already occupied by a huge glacier from the heart of the Coolins which poured itself outwards into Loch Scavaig.

Besides the hummocky drift which is never found at any great altitude, a smooth-surfaced drift occurs in the valleys, and imparts a flowing outline to the hills. It is occasionally as much as 100 feet in thickness, and is most developed in the plateaux-basalt region, where it consists of a reddish sandy clay, with small boulders and occasional larger ones, frequently striated.

In spite of all these changes, the physiographical types produced by the nature of the successive and varied volcanic upheavals still remain constant, and give much variety to the different parts of the island. All over the northern parts of Skye, the lofty table-lands with their steep seaward crags, or long green

[1] At a later period this glacier found access into Loch Sligachan, and the ice-sheet covering the moor here was consequently left stranded.

slopes dipping down into the valleys or winding sea-lochs, are the remnants of the ancient plateaux. On the cliffs the horizontal sheets, on the green slopes continuous parallel ribs of jutting rocks amid grass and heather and bracken, show the remains of the successive outflows of lava. To some these uplands may be monotonous, because of the sameness of their contours. Yet, whether carved into gentle slopes or steep frowning crags, they have an undoubted charm. Far inland they look down upon romantic sea-lochs; at every mile burns plunge down their sides or murmur in their hollows; nothing can be greener or more luxuriant than the grass which grows on their soil; their silence is broken by no ruder sound than the cries of sheep and cattle which feed in thousands on their rich pastures; they are haunts of ancient peace. In the valleys and on the margins of the lochs are many crofting townships, whose inhabitants cultivate the rich soil formed by the decaying lavas, or find a livelihood on the sea which has carved its way through the plateaux so far inland.

Dividing the northern from the southern part of the island is that tract of land covered by the Coolins and Red Hills. The rolling uplands come up to its edges, but within it we pass to an entirely different region, or rather two. There is first the district covered by the gabbros of the Coolins. Here are no tablelands nor gentle green slopes, but vast masses of black rock torn, broken, and shattered into every conceivable irregularity of form. Human foot rarely treads their recesses; cultivation is impossible in a region where there are only fissured mountain sides and serrated peaks too steep and dangerous except for the most experienced climber.

Over-against them is the region of the Red Hills, rounded cones and pyramids which contrast at once with the rolling uplands and the broken Coolins. The only point they have in common with the latter is the absence of vegetation. Their slopes are too

steep, too much covered with débris, to permit of any but the hardiest plant finding a footing there. Their rocks are of a bright colour, on which the sun's rays seem to love to linger, and which separates them sharply from the black and purple masses of gabbro so near at hand. A deeper silence than that of the tablelands wraps both round, and when it is broken it is with wilder clamour and uproar, as the storm blasts howl and thunder in their ghostly and eerie recesses. The wild creatures of the land have here made their last stand, and are found in all their natural conditions—red deer, wild cats, eagles, ravens. Strange that volcanic outbursts of such similar nature should have produced such different landscapes within so constricted an area as that of the Isle of Skye!

These volcanic rocks dominate the landscape so much that the sedimentary strata count for little where they have been laid bare. In the cliffs they are seen buried beneath piles of lava, but they are most prominent in the Strathaird district, and on the shore of Loch Slapin themselves form lofty cliffs, pierced by many regular recesses and caves, and darkened by dykes and veins of basalt and dolerite. Still older rocks have been laid bare in Sleat, where dark red sandstone forms the northern part of the peninsula, and rises into rounded heights covered with birch, through which great faces of naked rock, polished smooth by ice action, obtrude at intervals. The other side of the peninsula is mainly gneissose and schistose, and differs little in appearance from the sandstone region save that it has made this part of the country the garden of Skye.[1]

[1] Besides personal observation, my authorities for this chapter are Professor Judd's series of papers on the "Secondary Rocks of Scotland," in the *Quarterly Journal of the Geological Society*, vols. xxx. and xxxiv.; Sir Archibald Geikie's *Ancient Volcanoes of Britain*; while, though the Survey map for Skye is not yet published, much information is found in the annual reports of the Survey for the last few years, and in the *Memoir on the Tertiary Rocks of Skye* (1904).

CHAPTER XIV

THE PEOPLE

"Yet still the blood is strong, the heart is Highland,
And we in dreams behold the Hebrides."

WHEN Skye was first inhabited, and whether there was a pre-Celtic population, are, like the song the sirens sung, mere matters of conjecture. But hundreds of years after Skye had become an island of the Celts, there came an alien race of Norsemen, overrunning the island, as they had done the greater part of Scotland, conquering the people to some extent, forming colonies, and, no doubt, mixing with the Celtic population and exchanging ideas with them. But though they have left tokens of their presence in scores of place-names (three to two as compared with Celtic names) and in numerous Scandinavian descendants, these conquerors were mere birds of passage, and, on the whole, left the island as Celtic as they found it. Or rather the Celtic element was too strong to disappear before the Norse element; the two commingled, but, in the end, after profiting by the new alien life, the Celtic element found itself still in possession. The first chief of the MacLeods was a Norseman, and Somerled, Lord of the Isles, had a Norse mother. But who can think of Macdonalds or MacLeods as other than Celtic? Certainly no Skyeman could, and the present representatives of these ancient families would, in spite of Scandinavian descent and numerous intermarriages with the Sassenach, refuse to think of themselves as other than Celtic. For

when Alexander defeated Haco's army at Largs, and his fleet was scattered before the wild autumn blasts among the Hebridean seas which his race had ruled over so long, the day of the Scandinavian was over. Many of the Skye place-names are identical with those yet found in Norway, and the predominance of the name Nicholson in the island is directly due to Norse descent.[1] So side by side with the short, swarthy, large-mouthed, high cheek-boned Celt you will see the tall, fair-haired, blue-eyed Scandinavian in Skye and all the islands to this day. Yet the latter hold themselves as Celts and speak the Celtic tongue, and would deem themselves the direct antipodes of their kinsmen by race and blood in Caithness or Orkney. Hence, when we think of Skye, it must inevitably be as of an island of the Celts governed by Celtic ideals from first to last. And (if a certain Scandinavian professor is to be believed) the Western Isles aroused the poetic fire of the Norsemen, so that they wrote all their early poetry there and obtained all their local colour from the windy headlands and tumbling seas of the Hebrides![2]

Of the life of the people during these long silent ages little that is definite emerges. Probably the Skyeman of a hundred years ago differed but little from his far-off ancestor in early times, pagan or

[1] A Norse derivation is easily found for many place-names in Skye. Thus *bost*, a farm, occurs in many names, Calbost, cold farm, Nisabost, ness farm; *dalr*, a dale, is found in Suardal, the sward or tuft dale; *setr*, a seat or residence, or a mountain pasture, is changed into shader, and is frequently met with, as in Sulishader, Flashader, etc.; *tunga*, a tongue of land, gives Teangue; *gardr*, an enclosed space, occurs in Oshmigarry, which is Osmund's garth; *ögr*, a bay, gives its name to Uig. There are hundreds of other examples, affording an interesting study in philology. In some cases personal names like MacLeod had the Gaelic *Mac* prefixed to a Scandinavian name.

[2] No Celt has yet put forward such a claim. But it is confusing to a Sassenach like myself to be told by my friends in Skye that Burns was a Highlander, through some remote great-grandmother who came from Skye, and, *ergo*, became the national bard.

Christian. Certain new ideals were introduced by Christianity, but, on the whole, in spite of changing creeds, altered dynasties, and advancing civilisation, the circumstances of the people did not alter much. Theirs was the life of the countryman wherever found, who battles with a shaggy world and with the wild elements for a livelihood. Fishing, a certain degree of rough-and-ready agriculture, and the pastoral calling gave the chief means of living when the Romans were trying in vain to pierce the frontier of Caledonia, as they do now in our own day. For the higher side of life, there were the religious rites, pagan or Christian, to which the Celt has always been so devotedly and superstitiously attached. Art had its place in the lives of the people, and though they are now forgotten and have long since died out of use, the peculiarly Celtic designs represent a school of art which must have been known far and wide throughout the Hebrides. Round the evening fire the people gathered and listened to those charming folk-tales, so full of a weird beauty, which are still recited in similar circumstances in remote places, or joined in the plaintive songs of nameless bards, which if they never attained to the lyric beauty of the lowland ballads, were as dear to the Celt as these to the Sassenach. And during those forgotten years, dimly remembered wars, clan feuds, and cattle raids gave an outlet to the activities of the Skyeman, and supplied a zest to his otherwise monotonous existence. A document of one of the early Scottish parliaments says that "the Hieland men commonly reft and slew ilk uther," a sentence which sums up centuries of history, and suggests, to the imaginative, wailing widows, ravished women, bloody wounds, fierce slogans, the heather dyed a deeper purple, and homesteads smoking on the windy moor. Little wonder that another document inveighs fiercely against "the wicked blood of the Isles"! And though the Skyeman might resent Gildas's description of the Celts of the sixth century

as "a set of bloody freebooters with more hair on their faces than clothes to cover their nakedness," it is odd if this is not a fair account of one aspect of a race who never could get enough of fighting. Macdonalds raided MacLeods, and Mackinnons fought with both, and, on the whole, life in the small island of Skye must have offered unending excitement in those days as it still does wherever barbaric tribes exist together without cultivating friendly relations. The Skyemen of yore, sallying forth to raid the cattle of another clan, would have agreed with the African tribe who declare that Heaven gave all cattle to them, and therefore wherever there is any it is their duty to go and seize it.

On the whole, the Celts of Skye as a people strike the stranger with a certain melancholy. The world is not even now really converted, says Mr. Andrew Lang, and the Skyeman has preserved beneath his Christianity and in spite of the Free Kirk, many strains of paganism, like the Tuscan peasantry with their *Vecchia religione*, ten times more dear to them than Roman Catholicism.[1] He believes in witches and the evil-eye, in fairies and the second sight, in warlocks and water-kelpies and mermaidens. Lucky and unlucky times cause him to be select in his periods of work, never very exhausting, it is true, and he will try to avert evil by all manner of fanciful practices. He is intensely superstitious, and his superstition rises from the early pagan instincts and memories still uneradicated.

But it is not a Hellenic paganism which masters him; the gloomy and savage side of an ancient religion, common to the Celtic and Scandinavian races, has remained, while its blither aspects have passed away. The Skyeman has a certain, sly humour, and, like our brother Boer, he is intensely slim. Yet it is sad to see a whole race of people deprived so largely of those simple joys which once

[1] For which see Mr. Charles Godfrey Leland's delightful book, *Etruscan Roman Remains*.

inspired to merriment. You see them on "Sabbath," journeying to the kirk or returning from its sleep-inviting atmosphere after being stormed at in guttural and gusty Gaelic, with faces set to gloom, and scarce illumined by a smile. Or if a smile should flicker over the faces of the younger people, it is at once subdued, for remembrance tells of a black mark set against the name of the frivolous Sabbath-breaker in the books of Heaven. It is sad that ministers who might teach the people more hopeful and generous views of life, should go on insisting on "the gloomy gospel of damnation." Presbyterianism, or at least the straiter portion of it, condemns bagpipe music, dancing, and the numerous innocent amusements which once made the life of the people so happy, and, if truth be told, is harder upon those who cherish these things than upon the more guilty sinner. The minister has much to answer for, and religion, as taught to these people, has much to do with this gloomy character.[1] Yet it would be less than just not to say that an earlier Calvinism than that of Presbyterianism moulded the Celt and made him the melancholy creature that he is. The primitive religion which the countless generations, who were the forgotten forefathers of the crofters, cherished, must also have been stern and savage, as, in truth, it is known to have been. The old gods delighted in human sacrifices, and their Celtic worshippers loved to pay them due respect, and reeked of blood and slaughter. Their acquaintance with the rough Norseman did not teach them a gentle creed.

Nor has the environment in which the people live been without its depressing effects upon their character. It is true that on a glorious summer day, when the sun shines out of a cloudless Italian sky, when ocean is calm, save for its "many-twinkling smile," when the moor is decked with flowers and

[1] Stewart, in his *Sketches of the Highlands*, i. 135 (1825), has justly noted the effects of fanaticism in religion on the Highland character.

redolent with fragrant scents, when the lark sings blithely overhead, and all nature invites the beholder with a subtly seductive charm, the landscape is as joyful and inspiring as could be wished for. Then the blithe gods of Greece might conceivably disport themselves on the flowery moorland, or the nymphs' wild, careless laughter be heard from the hollows as they sported with the fauns, or the white arms of a naiad flash from the dark pools of the mountain torrent, while the rustics praised these light divinities with careless song and dance. But "it is not always May," and though it would be disloyal to say that Skye has not its due share of summer weather, yet the gloom of the short winter days, the howling winds, the pitiless lashing rain and hail, above all, the savage grandeur of mountain or towering cliff or raging sea, and the fixed melancholy of the wide moorlands with their sober hues, all have a depressing effect on the islander who lives without change among them. He strives with unsympathetic nature for a scant livelihood—cultivating scanty patches between the bare stone ribs of the earth, or braving the perils of the sea for fish.[1] He perceives himself condemned to the same monotonous life from year to year, shut in among his moorlands from the bravery of the outer world, shut out, too, from all those joyful merry-makings and amusements, which temper the monotony of other men's lives in cities. All winter he must sit perforce in his gloomy little hut, with its earthen floor and peaty atmosphere, debarred utterly from work or diversion. The gossip of the township, the deadly ecclesiastical feuds of the narrow sects of Presbyterianism, the political situation as it is set forth by the local newspapers from Dingwall or Inverness, and the delinquencies of these *bêtes humaines*, the landlords, keep his mind from becoming quite a blank, and so winter wears round to spring-time and work. All these things

[1] This hardly applies to Skye, for the Skyeman is no great fisherman.

tend to make the islesman what he is, and though to the *laudator temporis acti* the life of the Skyeman may seem blissful through ignorance, one can but regret that it is not more open to the more generous vistas along which other men perceive the things of the wider life.

Yet the life of the crofter has its compensations. A living is secure, if it be but a scanty one, and he has but few wants. Herrings, meal, and tea are easily procured, and if they do not make a banquet of the gods, yet, with an occasional braxy sheep, they satisfy the Skyeman. He lives, too, save in his hut (where, however, the peat reek does him no real harm and acts as a disinfectant), amidst an atmosphere which invigorates like a tonic and is a thousand times more delightful. And, incredible as it may seem, he manages to save money, and stories are current of this and the other crofter having a long bank account. One good man came to participate in the gift of seed potatoes given by a benevolent Government. He pulled out of his pocket not his form of application, as he thought, but a deposit receipt for two hundred pounds! How do they manage it? asks the stranger. But that is a question which only the crofter can answer, and one which he is not the least likely to reply to, not even though his minister should ask it.

Again, if he is prone to certain diseases, like consumption, or to insanity out of all proportion to the population, that is because he subsists now so largely on boiled tea, and also because years and years of inbreeding have enfeebled the vital powers. For, when all is said, we cannot but feel that the race is one which, in its present surroundings, is enfeebled and dying. If it is tenacious of its hold on life, the elements of strength have little to back them up. Habits of procrastination denote a feeble vitality, and the customary submission to fate suggests that the fires of energy are burning low. "It will do to-morrow," or "time enough," are common sayings

in a Skyeman's mouth when work presses, uttered in Gaelic with an incredibly and amusingly bored intonation; and, to tell the truth, he is incredibly lazy. An active outsider is sore put to it when he employs a man who dawdles hopelessly through the day, and it takes years before he learns patience, nor indeed is the lesson ever thoroughly acquired. This procrastination or laziness is humorously illustrated by the following verse which a crofter was moved to utter:—

> "Oh, that the peats would cut themselves,
> The fish shump on the shore,
> And that we all in bed might lie
> For aye and evermore, och, och!"

As in all savage communities, the women are the more active, walking miles to sell eggs or fowls, carrying up heavy creels of sea-ware for manure, and in general taking much the greater pains to accomplish something, while the men merely loaf about smoking. In spite of these excessive toils, they preserve an erect carriage, even to old age, and though not comely, preserve a certain freshness of appearance which is not unpleasing. Yet much of this labour seems unwomanly, and it is more than doubtful whether the emancipated women of our time would approve of these masculine labours. It is no uncommon sight to see two women with a rope round their chests drawing a harrow across the fields, just as Arthur Young saw a woman and an ox harnessed to the plough in France before the Revolution.

Ages ago the Celtic art was justly celebrated over Europe. Carved stones, ruined fanes, silver work, and illuminated manuscripts all survive to attest its curious beauty, its intricate patterns, and the delicacy of the artist's hand. Like all social art it had sprung from a close imitation of natural forms, which in time became conventionalised, but, in its later stages, it reblossomed into a very luxuriance of new conven-

tionalism, in which both the original pattern and the earlier conventional rendering could barely be traced. The practice of this native art has long ago perished, nor, in spite of its long existence, can the Celts be called an artistic people, as were the Greeks. Only a few in each generation and over a wide district preserved the artistic tradition, but the bulk of the people must have been dull to its refining influence. You will see more artistic and highly decorated houses in Fiji than you will in Skye. Even the wigwam of the Red Indian shows greater refinement than the black houses of Skye and the rest of the Hebrides. If it were not for the fact that the people are now, in most cases, within daily touch of civilisation, and have access to newspapers and to luxuries which to their grandfathers were not even a name, you would say, seeing these ugly, dwarfish black houses for the first time, that they belonged to a savage race remote from every refining influence. The efforts of the people, never, perhaps, very great, are frustrated by their natural surroundings and the moist climate, and, on the whole, the struggle for life is too keen for them to be careful of its merely ornamental side. So far as that exists it is seen in the art of dyeing and of blending colours to form the tartans of the clans. Its lack, again, is revealed in the absence of those small gardens which are the pride of southern cottagers, and beautify to an extraordinary extent the little landscape in which they are set.

There can be no doubt that it is precisely those factors, responsible for the want of any widespread love of beauty, which are to blame for the excessive whisky-drinking so common in Skye and all over the Highlands. In days gone by it must have run like water, and it was no uncommon thing for a man to drink a bottle of whisky daily. Lairds and tacksmen had a dram brought to their bedsides before getting up, as their degenerate successors nowadays have a cup of tea—both customs bad, but the former

probably the lesser evil of the two. Under the old régime, say forty or fifty years ago, the drinking customs in Skye were notorious. All the tacksmen drank heavily, and a whole bottle of whisky only made them mellow. The real man only appeared under the influence of liquor; hence in any business transaction the parties to it urged each the other on to fresh exertions, each hoping thus to come in time to the true opinion of his opponent and so get the better of him. On market-days in Portree, the farmers all joined in the ordinary at the village inn, where they sat eating and drinking till they were quite tipsy, afterwards sallying out to play shinty. No shame was attached to these proceedings, and indeed they were quite *en règle*. Nowadays things have changed for the better; the farmers are sober men, content with an occasional glass, and conscious that modern competition makes drunken habits spell ruin. Formerly every event was made an occasion for drinking. If it was raining, it was "we'll have a dram to keep out the wet"; if it was cold, "we'll have a dram to keep out the cold"; and if it was a fine day, why then "we'll drink its health." Yet it would be foolish optimism to say that drinking has really entirely ceased, else why do so many scores of travellers for whisky firms come to Skye? Everybody, in fact, drinks, and the crofter, though he has given up the private manufacture of whisky, can buy it so cheaply (and badly) that he consumes a good deal of it. As one of them once said in my hearing, "Och! I will never think I have a dram until I have two." It is not unlikely that wise and not fanatical dealing with this terrible Highland curse would effect much good; for instance, a temperance society lately started at Dunvegan by MacLeod and Mrs. MacLeod now numbers over a hundred members. But drinking in Skye is an old story. An act of the Privy Council in 1616 restricted Mackinnon to one tun of wine, and MacLeod and Donald Gorme to four tuns yearly, the act alleging as a reason for this pro-

hibition that "the beastlie and barbarous cruelties and inhumanities that fallis out amang the Islesmen" are caused by "the grite and extraordinar excesse in drinking of wyne."

I have referred already to the Highland Presbyterianism. I shall describe one of its most quaint features, an out-of-doors Communion, or "occasion," as it is called. With the straitest sect it begins on the Thursday, or fast day. The evening before that day the various ministers are down betimes to await the steamer and escort those brethren who have come to assist at this most solemn time to their respective manses. Groups of "holy women"—old creatures whose religious profession and (we shall hope) practice has bestowed upon them the name—clad in decent black, with sober bonnets edged neatly with white, emerge from the steamer's recesses and step on shore radiant with anticipation. To attend these wearisome and needlessly long services is the one joy of their lives, and indeed it speaks much for the cheerlessness of their lives, or (should I say) for the intensity of their faith, that they should be able to extract so much joy from these tedious proceedings. Each day the services in church begin at early morning and are carried on at intervals through the day. Friday forenoon is given up to the old men, the "bodachs," who, as the spirit moves them, expound a passage with solemn simplicity and (so it is said) to the intense amusement of the ministers—who must enjoy this rest in the midst of their labours.

Sunday, or, I should say, Sabbath, at last arrives, and long before the hour of service crowds are collecting in the field or on the hillside, where a pulpit like a large sentry-box is set up, and in front of it a long table with seats on which the intending communicants sit. These, so strictly are the tables fenced, so extreme is the reverence attached to the sacrament, will seldom amount to two score out of four or five hundred worshippers. At last the congregation is gathered and the service of the day

begins. There will be three or four ministers to take part in it, and psalm-singing, Bible-reading, prayers of an hour in length, two or three sermons of as many hours long, and the sacred rite itself, carry it on from eleven in the morning till five in the afternoon. With bent heads hid in shawls, the communicants sit during the long service. Around them, on chairs or sitting on the grass, are family parties, for the "occasion" means the reunion of relatives from a distance. These, perhaps three hundred strong, form the devouter part of the congregation, yet to one accustomed to the decencies of worship even they seem restless and occasionally inattentive. Beyond them (to represent the worldly element) are numbers of less interested persons, constrained to be present through fear of "the hangman's whip," as well as groups of children. They loll on the grass, stretch themselves, yawn, and (if I am not mistaken) long for the end of the day.

But (to an outsider) the music is the quaintest part of the service. The Gaelic tune progresses leisurely, swaying up and down, now slowly, now in sudden turns or grace-notes, as some supple tree might sway in an uncertain wind, and giving the effect of some exaggerated plain-song melody. The ear accustomed to lowland Scots' psalm-tunes seems now and then to catch some familiar tune or phrase, *Martyrs* or *Dundee* or what not, but it is presently lost in a multiplicity of turns and sudden flats and weird skirls. The precentor intones each line by himself—a reminiscence of the day when psalm-books were few and most people could not read—then the whole congregation take up the line in a swaying cadence. As to the preaching, the earnest Boanerges from his box will quickly have the attentive ear of the people if he is a popular man, and will rub in his points with fiery gesture and fierce declamation. Hell-fire (there is no doubt) is freely threatened, and Sabbath-breaking vigorously condemned, and the elect with grave, set faces are grimly satisfied as each point is made, or

some telling phrase or ludicrous metaphor is pressed home. The whole proceeding has a certain romantic quaintness, at once in keeping and out of keeping with its surroundings, suggesting both the grim austerities of the most narrow of Puritanic sects and the barbaric chant of some forgotten but indigenous paganism. The still air is full of the strident echoes of the minister's voice, rising and falling in a monotonous swing, exhorting, admonishing, and, doubtless, denouncing. And meanwhile God's good sunshine glows upon good and evil alike, and knows nothing of sectarian divisions, but only gladdens the heart of man.

Chateaubriand, in his *René*, describes how he travelled to Scotland to live in the memory of the heroes of Morven, and found only herds of cattle grazing on the spots where Ossian sang and Fingal conquered. It was a world *dispeopled of its dreams*. But one may moralise to a deeper strain and ask what attraction there can be in the austerities of sectarianism to the race which cherished Fingal and Cuchullainn, Selma and Bragela, and a host of graceful and poetic heroes and heroines? Romance there is none in it; culture is banished; and the cheerful day and the smiling hillsides seem to give the lie to its dismal forebodings.

But in spite of these things the simple life of the people has an attractive side for those who are weary of the many unnatural ways of modern life, and who sigh for Wordsworth's plain living and high thinking. The people live close to nature, and, in spite of the evident discomfort of much in their lives, have virtues and courtesies which would be often looked for in vain in higher classes of society. Their speech is deprecatory but not servile; they fear to offend your sensibilities by an injudicious word; their manners have natural refinement, and this causes them to do and say what is the right thing at the right moment. Much has been written on these qualities of the Celt, and there is the less need to dwell upon them here,

save to note the truth of such statements in passing, and to say how much of pleasantness it lends to a stranger's intercourse with the crofters.

Not only their independent condition as, in effect, peasant proprietors suggests the primitive state of their life, but many incidental aspects of it do so too, and strike the stranger with the sense of living in some primitive foreign land. You see the crofter leading his horse with panniers slung on its back, crammed with the stuff which the steamer has brought him from smoky Glasgow. Where else in broad Scotland can that be seen? Or, at times, even when a journey of several miles has to be taken with the mare, her foal keeps her company, walking demurely by her side, or seeking nutriment at every halt. Crofter women toil along the roads in winter or summer with baskets of eggs or even live fowls, clucking in a resentful fashion, which they mean to sell in Portree or elsewhere. On market-day you will see large family parties who have brought in stirks or horses to sell; possibly they started from home when other people were going to bed, and even rested for a while in some sheltered nook of the moor to sleep beneath the stars. On such occasions friend greets friend with mighty hand-shakings, prolonged kisses, smiling faces, and a flow of Gaelic. There is a heartiness in such friendship which shows the warm nature which, after all, underlies the usually solemn exterior of the Celt.

Such foreign and primitive aspects of Skye life were, of course, far more common before the advent of MacBrayne's steamers, opening up the markets of the south, and bringing meal, oil, tea, and a hundred other things which the people either produced for themselves, or, not knowing the need of them, did without. Tea-drinking is now one of the most fruitful sources of ill-health in Skye, but in 1823 the Rev. A. MacGregor says there were only three teapots known among the crofters of the large

parish of Kilmuir. Excessive tea-drinking was unknown, as was also the use of wheaten or loaf bread. Porridge was frequently made directly from the standing grain in the following manner. A woman cut a certain quantity with a sickle. The straw and husks were consumed by setting fire to the ears, while the grain dropped into the quern. Within a wooden frame the lower stone of the quern, with a slightly concave surface, was fixed. The upper stone revolved in it by another woman giving a circular motion to a peg fixed in a hole near its outer edge. The first woman fed it with grain, and the action was accompanied by a chant in Gaelic. When the grain was sufficiently ground it was made into porridge, the whole operation occupying not much more than an hour.

Plates, knives, and forks were mostly unknown. A square board with an outer frame held the mixture of potatoes and herring cooked together. All the members of the family sat round this board, each with his or her horn spoon, though sometimes one spoon had to suffice for the family. Paraffin lamps did not exist for the islanders. A cruisie was used instead, the oil being made mostly from the livers of fish, extracted by means of heat. "Not light, but rather darkness visible," might justly characterise the illumination given by the cruisie. Such earthenware vessels as were in use were called "craggans," and were of home manufacture. They were usually made by the most tasteful of the family group, from a certain kind of clay. A circular bottom was first made on which the vessel itself was built up and shaped as required. It was then smoothed with a knife, and after being dried in the sun, was burned in a peat fire, where it not infrequently fell to pieces.

Not the least touching part of what a stranger sees of the life of the islander, are the funeral processions. The coffin is laid on a bier which is borne by six men, three on each side. In front, a longer or shorter column of friends and acquaintances walks

two abreast. At intervals the first six halt and let the column proceed between them, then, when the bier is abreast of them, they relieve the bearers, who now take their place immediately in front of it. Thus, as each relay of men take their turn, the original bearers find themselves at last in the front of the column, ready again to act. The whole thing works smoothly, and in this simple way each man has the honour of bearing the dead to the last resting-place. On these solitary roads, amid the silent moor, such a procession touches the deepest chords of feeling in the eye-witness. He who strove with nature in these noiseless valleys for a scanty livelihood, is at last committed to the keeping of old mother earth by those who must still resume the conflict.

"What traveller—who—
(How far soe'er a stranger) does not own
The bond of brotherhood, when he sees them go
A mute procession on the houseless road?
. . . . . .
Oh! blest are they who live and die like these,
Loved with such love and with such sorrow mourned."

CHAPTER XV

THE CROFTING SYSTEM

"Here may he hardy, sweet, gigantic grow, here tower
proportionate to Nature,
Here climb the vast pure spaces unconfin'd, uncheck'd by
wall or roof,
Here laugh with storm or sun, here joy, here patiently
inure,
Here heed himself, unfold himself (not others' formulas
heed), here fill his time,
To duly fall, to aid, unreck'd at last,
To disappear, to serve."

WALT WHITMAN.

THE crofting township system in Skye and elsewhere is the direct outcome of a primitive land tenure which was once common all over Europe, and may be traced in many far-separated lands throughout the world. That tenure is known as the village community system. Apart altogether from all theories of its origin, or from the primitive relation of the community to its chief, the system was mainly that of a common proprietorship or use of land under cultivation and pasture. The land under cultivation was divided among the members of the community according to fixed rules; the pasture land might be held in common, or might similarly be divided. The chief received more shares or allotments than his people, who looked up to him as their father, and usually helped to cultivate his land. With the manner in which the land came to be actually possessed by patriarchal chiefs or feudal lords, from whom the people held their allotments as serfs or as tenants, we are happily not concerned here. But in

the Western Highlands the remnants of the village community system—the land, however, being held from its owner by the tenants for a fixed rent, for service, or for payment in kind—are not far to seek.

Taking the division of the arable land by lot at regularly recurring periods among the members of the township and the use of the hill pasture in common, as the characteristic features of the village community system, we can trace its existence in the islands sometimes in an unchanged, usually in a modified manner. The division by lot is known as the runrig system, perhaps a corruption of the Gaelic Roinn Ruith, division run, or division in common. This division pure and simple existed in the island of Heisgeir up to at least 1884. The land was held by ten tenants and was divided into twelve portions, two tenants receiving each two shares. Every three years the tenants met, and one of their number, called the "constable," duly elected for that purpose, proceeded to divide the land into six parts. Lots were then drawn by six members of the community; those who held double shares kept each a sixth, the remaining four then also by lot subdivided each his sixth with the four who had not drawn. Thus each person had a subdivision or rig. The township herdsman then received a rig, lying outside the others and next the grazing land; obviously the cattle could not stray on to the common land if the herdsman took care to keep them off his own land. Other small rigs were then set apart for the poor, squatters or cottars. At the end of three years this series of rigs was let out as grazing land, and new ground was allotted for cultivation. Each tenant had the right to pasture so many sheep or cattle on the grazing land according to a definite arrangement limiting the number—a souming, as it is called.

This represents the village community system practically unchanged, and there is little doubt that it once prevailed generally in this form in the West

Highlands. But it tended to disintegration in various ways. Thus what is called "the intermediate runrig system" represents the next stage. Here the grazing land is held as before; part of the arable land only is held in common and by lot; the remainder is divided up into fixed allotments. Lastly, the runrig system disappears where the allotments or crofts are unchanged and each man holds his own; the pasture land, however, being still common ground.

Each township regulated its affairs and appointed its officials according to settled rules. Of these officials the most important was the "constable." On a fixed day the people met at a place called Cnocna-Comhairle, the Council Hill, and proceeded to elect their constable. Having been elected, he took off shoes and stockings, and, uncovering his head, bowed low, and promised before God and men to be faithful to his trust. His duties included the allotment of the land; the watching of roads and their repairs; engaging a herdsman; seeing that the number of fixed days' labour was duly paid; and various other matters, *e.g.* arranging the circuit of the townland crops. This last was a most important matter in days when fences were unknown, and cattle, not to speak of wilder animals, were too ready to come down and eat the produce of the land. The herdsman performed this duty by day; by night two men, chosen by rotation, perambulated the lands, and if they were negligent had to make good the loss.

In summer the whole township migrated to the hill pasture with their sheep and cattle. Nothing could equal the luxuriant verdure which clothes the West Highland hillsides in early summer, affording the richest food for stock. A procession of all the inhabitants, their horses, sheep, and cattle, was formed on May-day, the men carrying the necessary implements, the women bedding and food. Arrived at the high pasture land, the huts were repaired and

made ready for habitation; the cattle turned out to graze; and a simple "shieling feast" was prepared. Then hymns were sung, for in the Highlands, as among all primitive people, all work was done to music. The shieling life continued until the crops were ripening, and it afforded to these simple islanders a prolonged picnic under rough conditions, and provided a welcome change in the monotony of their lives. When the work of the day was done, the long summer evenings were spent in music and dancing on the soft turf, the older people looking on and recalling the days when they too were young. The calm evening air among the lonely hills was filled with simple merriment, and echoed to the strains of sweet love-songs, plaintive airs, and stirring ballads in the swinging Gaelic rhythm.

The shieling huts were made of turf with a roof of branches turf-covered, or were actual beehive dwellings of stone, the roof tapering to a cone and surmounted by a flat stone pierced with a hole to let the peat smoke out. The floor space was never more than 6 feet by 9, though several huts were sometimes joined together, accommodating several families. The sleeping places were nothing but low narrow recesses in the thickness of the wall, and called *crupa*, from *crupadh*, to crouch. In these huts, whether of stone or turf, we are taken back to a very early period in human history; the structural features differ little from those of the houses of the Stone Age. But as the shieling life was almost entirely an out-of-doors one, little harm could have resulted from these confined dwellings. Indeed, old people who remember the bygone shieling days, look back to them with regret. They were a pleasant holiday, spent in charming surroundings, in health-giving air, and to many of the young lads and lasses they must have awakened the primitive passion of love such as we know it, simple and beautiful, among the herdsmen and fair girls in

USING THE CAS-CROM

the *Idyls* of Theocritus.[1] With the introduction of sheep-farms and the limitation of the hill pasture this chapter in the island life was closed, but it is one which touches the heart, and awakens the primitive pastoral strain which is dormant somewhere in the being of us all.

The method of cultivating the ground was (and still is) simple enough. No plough was used; instead of it the *cas-crom* or crooked spade—an instrument with a long shaft, a blade about a foot and a half long set obliquely at the end of the shaft, and a rest for the foot. With this primitive instrument (which is still in common use) a man could cut the sod with wonderful speed. The manure used was mainly sea-ware, scattered on the ground and covered with each heap of earth turned over by the spade. Oats were grown for oatmeal; now they are grown only for fodder. But even in the golden age of crofting (which one fears is entirely suppositious) there could scarcely have been a large harvest of oats, and we know that grain was often imported into the country. Potatoes were then as now a staple food. Many of the crofters were fishermen, and the herring industry supplied them at once with money and food. Cloth was spun and woven from the wool of their sheep, and an interesting chapter might be written on this home industry, the dyes used and the methods of using them, and the weaving songs sung by the women.

Up till the year 1843 there was one industry which was the source of much money being brought into the country, but which has now disappeared. This was the manufacture of kelp, ruined utterly by the introduction of barilla and free trade. The industry was started by Rory Macdonald, a tacksman in North Uist, in 1735. With the Celtic love of nicknames he was at once rechristened Rory of the

[1] Here and there among the hills mounds of turf and stone may be seen, puzzling to antiquaries, but really the remains of the shielings.

Ashes. The industry soon spread, and by Pennant's time (1770) it was found in all the islands. The process of manufacture was simple if toilsome. Sea-ware was collected in large quantities and spread out to dry. It was then reduced to ashes in rude kilns—twenty tons of sea-ware yielding only a ton of kelp. The work was hard; the kelp-burners were often not crofters, but the poorest cottars, ill-clad, ill-fed, and miserable. In the best seasons these hardy labourers might be paid £2 a ton, but they could not expect to make during a single season more than five tons of kelp with the utmost labour. Landlord and tacksman, like the modern capitalist, profited by this labour, and during the best years cleared £8 per ton. Incomes of £20,000 a year were made by the kelp industry: naturally, when Spanish barilla was introduced, it spelt ruin to more than one landlord, and starvation to cottars and to the crofters who had neglected their land for the sake of making a little money. This department of Highland peasant life, after lasting for a century, completely disappeared, and is now practically forgotten; yet it cannot be omitted in any picture of crofter life, past and present.

Besides the crofter pure and simple, there were cottars, who lived mostly by labour, and paid rent, if any, to a tenant, though they occasionally possessed a small bit of land which afforded them and their families a meagre subsistence. As we have seen, this class was largely occupied in the kelp industry, and no doubt was much increased by it.

Almost entirely up to the eighteenth century, and to a considerable extent after that time, crofters did not hold their land directly from the owner, but from the tacksman, to whom they were subtenants at will, paying rent in money, in kind, and in service. These tacksmen were for the most part what would be called gentlemen farmers elsewhere, and in many cases were representatives of collateral branches of the chief's own house, and of course, *more Scottico*,

related to him more or less nearly. They were well educated ; in many cases they were officers living on half-pay ; and as we see them in the pages of Johnson and other eighteenth-century travellers, were shrewd, capable men, living roughly but bountifully ; hard drinkers, but long livers ; acquainted with the manners of good society, but perfectly at home among the peasantry. They were invariably called after the name of their farm—Uilinish, Kingsburgh, Corrie, Gesto, or what not, while their wives were known as "the mistress of Kingsburgh," or whatever the farm might be called. "In this scheme of society much would, of course, depend on the individual character of the tacksmen. Some would be careless, some would be benevolent, some intelligent and enterprising, votaries of innovation and improvement."[1] But on the whole the system was far from being an agreeable one for the crofter. The tacksman frequently kept the best part of the land to himself, and rented out the worse parts to the subtenants at exorbitant rates out of all proportion to the value of the land. Besides this he exacted so many days' labour from his crofters, according to the size of their holdings, and, as human nature naturally rebels at enforced labour, while the tenants were more often driven than led, bitter feeling was all too common between tacksman and tenant. This is frequently alluded to in terse Gaelic proverbs, which put the state of matters with a bluntness excusable under the circumstances. Thus, "*Gille ghille is meas na' n diobhail*" (The servant of the servant is worse than the devil) ; while a well-known rhyme may be rendered in English—

> "The tenancy is bad enough,
> But the devil's own business
> Is in the subtenancy."

It is only fair to add that the worst features of the system, which made the subtenants little better

[1] *Crofters' Commission Report*, 1884, p. 5.

than cringing slaves, were introduced by interlopers who had no connection with the old families, and no kindly feeling of kinship for the peasantry.

With the growth of our colonies in the eighteenth century, the people began to seek refuge from these evils in emigration. It is a curious fact that, while at a later time the enforced emigration caused by the wholesale evictions in the Highlands naturally became a crying grievance and produced a great outcry through the country, at that time the people emigrated in such numbers, and often so secretly, that the Government of the day sought to prevent it, but in vain. Emigration had then all the glamour of a new idea, and was palatable when the people resorted to it of their own free will. An emigrant ship would come in to one of the lochs by night, and next morning a whole township would be found tenantless, its inhabitants having embarked to seek their fortunes beyond the sea in lands where they should only again in dreams behold the Hebrides. Numerous letters which passed between the Government and the chief of the MacLeods, beseeching him to take steps to prevent the emigration if he could, still exist in the muniment room of Dunvegan Castle. Probably the Government was prompted to take action rather from hatred of the Americans, so lately revolted from the mother-country, than from disinterested love of the crofters. Even so late as 1830 a petition was sent up to London, signed by over three hundred crofters in Bracadale district, praying for means to remove them to America.

America was the chosen field of the emigrants, and Lord Selkirk, writing in 1822, quotes a saying that there were as many Skyemen there as in Skye itself. North Carolina, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward's Island were much sought after. At a later time many went to Australia, where a district on Hunter's River, colonised by Skyemen, was called Skye.

Meanwhile during the course of the eighteenth century the subtenants were more and more brought

into direct relationship with the proprietors. In some cases leases were granted to them ; the holdings were made more secure ; the scheme of payments and services was arranged with greater definiteness and with much less harshness. Thus the evils of the sub-tenant system to a great extent disappeared with the disappearance of the system itself.

Meanwhile the sheep-farming mania began, and was soon in full progress all through the Highlands.[1] It had been discovered that the immense tracts of hill land afforded the finest pasturage for sheep, and the temptation to turn these into large sheep-farms could scarcely be resisted. These were the days when sheep-farming produced large fortunes, and, given the land, it was easy to find tenants ready to pay a large rent to the owners. But, as we have already seen, much of the hill pasture had been assigned to the dense crofting population throughout the Highlands and islands. To remedy this and get rid of them, or of the bulk of them, clearances on a large scale were resorted to ;[2] whole glens were depopulated ; the people were sent off to America ; and pasture of less value and much curtailed was assigned to those who remained.

The cry was raised then as now that the people had an inalienable right to the land of which they were deprived. It is easier to assert this than to prove it. Doubtless, while the clan system prevailed, a chief would scarcely have ventured to deprive any of his clan of their patch of ground without strong reasons. But that did not argue any vested right in a clansman to his land ; still more, when the clan system as such had come to an end, did any ground

[1] History repeats itself, for in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries much arable land in Yorkshire was formed into sheep-farms, because of the extension of the wool trade resulting from commercial relations with the Low Countries. As a direct consequence, many villages were absolutely deserted. Their sites may still be traced on the wolds.

[2] This statement refers to the Highlands generally, not to Skye, where it is doubtful how far clearances were resorted to.

for such an imaginary right cease with it. On the other hand, in many Highland districts the clearances were carried out with great harshness, unpardonable in the circumstances. Moreover, as human nature is full of sentiment, it is easy to see that, however kindly the clearance of a whole glen might be effected, the mere fact that fifty or a hundred families were evicted in a single district at once takes the colour of a crying evil, which it would not have done had only one family received notice to quit. Yet we have also to bear in mind that the increase of population was already the cause of great hardships in itself—starvation and misery in every form. And, taking this into account along with the fact that voluntary emigration was already being resorted to, there is reason to believe that, sentiment apart, many of the people were only too glad to find a home elsewhere in lands where nature responded more readily to their labours. Events proved that they and their descendants have prospered to an extent which could never have been possible for them at home. For it is a curious circumstance that the Highlander works better and is more prosperous out of the Highlands than in them. New surroundings, a less enervating climate, and the positive need of exertion, bring out in him (as in most people) his best qualities and make him what our colonies know him to be.

If the gradual diminution of the subtenant system relieved the crofting population of many evils, it is as certain that the root of the later grievances which culminated in the risings of 1882, followed by the Crofters' Commission and a series of new enactments, is to be found mainly in the reduction of the pasture lands due to sheep-farming. From this root, other grievances, real or imaginary, soon sprung up. Rents were frequently raised; compensation for improvements were seldom granted; there came years of depressed values; on some estates payments for peats, sea-ware, and heather for thatching were demanded; it was alleged (often with truth) that the

arable ground was subject to the ravages of game—deer, grouse, etc. At the same time the opening up of the Highlands showed their peasant population, so long shut up in their own glens, wider vistas of life. Better systems of education were called for; new wants were created which could hardly be supplied out of their scanty means of livelihood; more roads, more means of communication, piers, harbours, steamers, were in demand. The growing discontent of the people was easily fanned by agitators, who omitted invariably to paint the better side of the crofting life, dwelt extravagantly on grievances, and brought reckless charges on proprietors, many of whom had no power or means to help their tenants, with whom they were in sympathy, and some of whom, like the late chief of MacLeod, had ruined themselves in trying to help the crofters in a succession of bad years. Real grievances, agitation, the example of Ireland, all had a natural effect on an emotional but ignorant people. Imagination lent a rosy colour to the past, and it was easy to draw the picture of their forefathers, prosperous and paying a moderate rent for a large extent of land; blessed with abundant harvests and many cattle, and free access to the rivers and the sea for their produce. These were the days of plenty, of contentment.[1] Witness after witness examined before the Commission in 1884 showed that some such picture was fixed in his mind as to the days of old. How little reason there was for its existence has already been shown, and is amply confirmed by the sordid misery of the Highland peasantry in those days, as depicted by careful but independent observers like Pennant,

[1] There is no doubt that before the Highlands became available to sporting tenants, the peasantry had more or less free access to the rivers, lochs, and moors, and subsisted largely on the produce found therein. But of course game was not then preserved, and probably there was less of it. Raiding each other's cattle must also have provided both sport and food! See Stewart's *Sketches of the Character, Manners, etc., of the Highlanders*, i. 87 *seq.*

Buchanan, and the writers of the *Old Statistical Account*. We know, too, as a mere matter of history, what fearful destitution existed at recurring periods during the first half of the nineteenth century, and the kindness and leniency shown by the MacLeods and Macdonalds to their tenants. In 1837 Lord Macdonald gave £2000 worth of provisions to his tenants, and the self-sacrifice of MacLeod in the bad season of 1845 will not soon be forgotten in Skye. Such benefits as may have existed under the old system—greater extent of land, the kelp industry, and the ignorance of the outer world which kept the people from envy, natural or unnatural—were counterbalanced, if not outweighed, by the exactions under which they suffered. The exactions removed were soon forgotten; the benefits lost were unduly enlarged upon. To say, however, that the crofters had no grievances, would be to show scant sympathy for them as a class, and though we may regret the methods which led to the risings and the blame so foolishly cast on the landlords as a class, no one who knows the crofter can be sorry that things did come to a head, and that the Government took the matter in hand.

Anyone who has read the detailed examination of witnesses before the Royal Commission of 1883, the appendices in the first volume of the *Report* of 1884, and the *Report* itself, knows how difficult a thing it is to arrive at a conclusion which will do justice all round. Of the demands of the crofter, however, two very plainly emerge—more land and fixity of tenure. Similarly, those who live in the midst of a crofting population know how very easy it is for outsiders, seeing the life of the crofter *en passant*, to make the most grievous mistakes about it. For example, there are the black houses. The visitor sees their low stone walls pierced by one or two tiny windows; their thatched roofs held down by ropes weighted with stones, or by old fishing-nets; occasionally he sees a chimney, more often the

A CROFTER'S HOUSE
(Interior)

smoke streams out at the door or at a hole in the roof. He enters, and out of the darkness and peat smoke, things begin to emerge to his vision. There is the rough earthen floor; the peat fire burning on a flat stone in the middle of the floor; box beds are ranged down one side of the hut; a partition separates one end from the other; on the rafters, blackened with smoke, some hens are perched. It seems to him the very abomination of desolation. He goes off, cursing the landlords who would allow such dwellings as these. He forgets that they may be dear to the people who dwell in them; that they are not necessarily insanitary; that their inhabitants exhibit none of the savagery which he inevitably attributes to them in such surroundings; they are refined, courteous, kindly, and from these houses have come many whose names are honoured and beloved in Scotland and in many quarters of the world. Moreover, he does not see that these houses may, to the people, have associations with the romantic past which is so dear to them, and are, indeed, in true harmony with the rugged and shaggy moorland on which they stand.

Or he sees their scanty patches of arable ground; or themselves working out of doors in wet weather, which is nothing to them but is abominable to him. All this spells misery in his eyes. But the crofter is contented with it; he is not overdriven with work; the work is congenial; he is a son of the soil; he can turn to many other occupations; and, compared with the lot of slum-dwellers in towns, his is a pleasant one.

So easy is it to form false impressions out of a little knowledge, joined with a vast ignorance of surrounding circumstances and atmosphere! How few men can say what is true of the crofter so long as he pays his rent and observes the rules of his township, that he is independent and his own master? Besides this, he is pursuing a business which somehow seems to be bound up with the truer life of man. Nature and he understand each other;

from her he learns many virtues; his ambitions are few and easily attained. Happy crofter, who knows nothing of *sturm und drang*, and has enough to live on of simple food, and has learned contentment apart from ease and luxury.

With the passing of the Crofters' Holdings Act of 1886 most of the worst grievances were removed, and the position of the crofter became one of security, while a moderate prosperity was brought within the reach of all who were active enough to strive for it. The one measure of the Act which produced the greatest satisfaction was the granting of fixity of tenure. What a vast improvement this was on the earlier days, when the tenant "had not even a formal verbal promise for any fixed time, but relied on the character of his landlord and the fashion of the country."[1] Now, no crofter can be removed from his holding except for breach of certain conditions. He must pay his rent regularly, must not injure his holding or subdivide or sublet it, must not violate any written condition for the protection of either landlords or neighbouring crofters. For certain reasons, to be approved of by the Crofters' Commission, a holding may be resumed by the landlord, but adequate compensation must be made by letting to the crofter land of equal value or by compensation in money. The Act also provides that the rent agreed upon shall not be altered save by fresh agreement entered into by both parties, or by appeal to the Commission to fix a "fair rent." A crofter may renounce his tenancy at a year's notice, but in such a case, or where he is removed from his holding for breach of the statutory conditions, he is entitled to compensation for permanent improvements made by him. Enlargement of holdings is also made compulsory on landlords when application is made for this by five or more crofters, provided that land is available and after due inquiry and hearing of parties by the Commission. The land liable to be used for

[1] MacCulloch, *Description of the Western Isles*, iii. 102 (1824).

enlargement is strictly defined by the Act in fairness to the proprietor. The right of bequest of a croft is also fully provided for.

The working of this Act has proved its beneficial nature, and though it does not relieve poverty where poverty exists, it makes it possible for a diligent crofter to obtain a sufficient livelihood with the consciousness that he, like the large landowner, has a stake in the country, and is, in effect, himself a proprietor. At the same time the Act provided that sums might be lent on due security by the Fishery Board (acting on behalf of the Treasury) to crofters engaged in the fishing industry. Such loans might be used in building, purchasing, or repairing vessels and fishing gear.

In 1897 a new measure was passed providing for the administration of sums available for the improvement of congested districts in the Highlands. This Act allows the expenditure of £15,000 annually by the Commissioners, together with other sums which may be voted by Parliament. This money may be expended—(1) in developing agriculture, dairy-farming, breeding of live stock and poultry; (2) in providing seed potatoes, seed oats, and implements for agriculture and dairy work; (3) in providing land for subdivision among the crofters and cottars of a congested district, or for the enlargement of their present holdings; (4) in aiding the migration and settling of crofters and cottars to other parts of Scotland; (5) in the development of fishing; (6) in making or improving lighthouses, piers, roads, bridges, footpaths, and meal-mills, and providing guarantees for telegraphic and postal facilities; (7) in developing spinning, weaving, and similar home industries; and (8) in providing or improving harbours. Such assistance in congested areas is given by way of gift or loan, or by sale at cost price. During the short time in which the Commissioners have administered the provisions of this Act, enough has been done to show that it will be invaluable in time

to come, if only the people themselves will rise to the occasion, and engage in the industries which it tries to develop. Practical lessons have been given in improved agricultural methods, *e.g.*, spraying potatoes to prevent disease ; stud animals have been provided in numerous districts to improve the breed of horses, cattle, and sheep; bee-keeping has been experimented with, as well as the improvement of the methods of poultry-keeping. The making of new roads and of piers and boat-slips has gone on with great speed, and has offered to isolated districts such means of reaching the busier centres as must prove an immense benefit to the crofters of these districts. As a rule, in making a new road or pier, the Commissioners offer to defray the bulk of the cost, provided the remainder is raised locally, or, in some cases, the work is carried on by the crofters themselves. The reports of this Congested Districts Board and of the Crofters' Commission itself show what has been done, and should be studied carefully by all who wish to understand the problems of crofter life in the Highlands.

Crofters, however, are not always alive to what is best for them. They are affected deeply by sentimental reasons, they do not always exercise forethought, and they too often seize upon a present good (which is easily obtained) to avoid the trouble involved in obtaining a future greater good. In 1901 the township of Sconser, one of the poorest in Skye, infected periodically by typhus, and seldom visited by sunlight, was offered by the Board the opportunity of removal to two farms on Loch Eishort, where houses would be built for them, roads and fences made, stock improved, and various other privileges supplied. The offer was refused ; and though many of the reasons alleged for the refusal seem sound enough, they are somewhat discounted by the fact that the new land was said to be under a ban and therefore "impossible of profitable occupancy." No better offer could have

been made, but, as far as Sconser is concerned, the opportunity is gone, as the land in question is at present in process of being subdivided into small crofts to relieve congestion elsewhere.[1]

Since the formation of the Crofters' Commission a fair rent has been fixed over all the crofting areas, and, working out the average on the Macdonald and MacLeod estates in Skye, I find that on the former there are 861 crofts paying an average rent of £2, 18s. 5d., and on the latter 196 crofts with an average rent of £3.[2] On both estates the rents vary from 2s. 6d. to £10 or £11, but the greater bulk of the crofters pay a rent of £2 or £2, 10s. A £10 croft will usually mean about 7 acres of arable ground, besides the hill pasture, but the real extent of such a croft will depend largely on the nature of the ground itself.

As examples of the extent of ground held by the crofters of a township and of the rent paid by them, I shall take three townships which may be considered fairly representative, and give the necessary details.

The township of Peinchorran in the Braes district,

[1] Both the Crofters' Holdings and the Congested Districts Acts refer to cottars as well as crofters. Technically a cottar is the occupier of a dwelling-house situated in a crofting district, with or without land, who pays no rent to the landlord (*i.e.* a squatter), *or* the tenant from year to year of a dwelling-place, situated in a crofting parish, who pays an annual rent not exceeding £6, but who has no arable or pasture land. The position of such cottars is obviously a poor one. They depend for a livelihood on casual work, fishing, etc. Fortunately they are a decreasing quantity. On the MacLeod estate there are seventy-seven cottars, paying an average rent of £1; on the Macdonald estate there are fifty-five, with an average rent of 6s. MacLeod has recently assigned land at Carbostvore in Glen Brittle to ten landless cottars. The higher average of cottar rental on the MacLeod estate is due to the fact that many of these cottars have land.

[2] Taking five as the average number in a crofting family, this would give 4305 of a crofting population on the Macdonald estate, and 980 on the MacLeod estate.

near Portree, contains eighteen crofts.[1] The rents of these crofts vary from £4, 16s. to £1, 12s., giving an average rent of £3, 7s. 8d. The smallest of the crofts has 2 acres of arable land, and 1 rood 30 poles of outrun. For this a rent of £2, 9s. is paid. Most of the others have, roughly, 4 acres of arable, and 1 of outrun. The largest has 5¼ acres of arable, and 1 of outrun, with a rent of £5. The rent of the whole township is £60, 19s. Outrun, it should be explained, is the strip of ground between what is strictly arable and the wall bounding the hill pasture. To this township is allotted 3732 acres of common hill pasture, part of which is held in common with two smaller townships. The number of cattle and sheep which each crofter may put on the hill grazing must not exceed his just allowance, and so affect the fair exercise of the joint rights of his fellow-crofters on the township. An Act passed in 1891 allows the crofters of a township to appoint a committee out of their own number triennially to regulate all matters concerning the hill grazing.

This township has the advantage of being situated close to the sea, unlike our second example—the township of Mugeary, which lies inland, behind Fingal's Seat, near Portree. The crofts here are of a higher value in proportion to their size, as the ground is richer in quality. Of the seven crofts which make up the township, the smallest contains 4 acres 1 rood 30 poles of arable, and 1 acre 2 roods of outrun, and the largest 6 acres 3 roods 38 poles of arable, 2 acres 2 roods 10 poles of outrun. The rents of these two crofts are £9, 15s. and £10, 12s. respectively, and of the whole township £66, 7s. To this township are allotted 1630 acres of hill pasture.

As a third example I shall take the township of Roag on the MacLeod estate. The area of this

[1] In reality only thirteen, but, as frequently happens, some of these are subdivided, and the subdivisions made into separate crofts.

township is 99 acres 2 roods 21 poles of arable, and 54 acres 3 poles of outrun, while the hill pasture extends to 1688 acres. There are twenty-two crofts paying a gross rental of £64, 4s., giving an average rent of £2, 18s. 4d. The largest croft has an area of 5 acres 2 roods 6 poles of arable, and 4 acres 1 rood 11 poles of outrun, with a rent of £3, 10s. The smallest croft, for which a rent of £2, 4s. is paid, contains 4 acres 1 rood 8 poles of arable, and 3 acres 26 poles of outrun.

It is interesting to inquire whether a large or a small croft is better for the majority of crofters. Some light would be thrown on this question by the division of the farm of Bay by MacLeod of MacLeod into five small farms, each valued at £21 annually, but though these farms have been taken up by crofters, their occupancy is too recent (only since 1901) to say whether the experiment will prove an unqualified success. MacLeod has informed me that, on the whole, such small farms probably do better on the mainland than in Skye. The fishing in Skye is always more or less doubtful, and the extra hands employed by such a small farmer would find themselves idle for part of the year at least.

The answer to the whole question seems to be (paradoxical as it may seem) that a small croft, say of £3 rent, is probably better for the crofter than one of £10. On a large croft or small farm, a family can be supported without much exertion, and certainly without bringing the crofter into touch with those wider views of things which keep life wholesome. He gets a sufficient living from his croft, and therewith he is content. Men of a less easy-going temperament, and with more vital energy, would do otherwise: they would try to do the very utmost for their farm and to get the very utmost out of it, and for them the large croft or small farm would be the one thing needful. Again, in no case does the crofter do the best by his land. There is little rotation of crops; the manuring is done by using

sea-ware, or, where a township is far from the seaboard, is mainly neglected. But since a small croft of itself cannot support a family, the crofter or his sons must perforce employ their energies in supplementing their crofting work by other employments. Thus they are compelled to go fishing; some of them find lucrative wages as yachtsmen during the season; others go as navvies or get occasional occupation in the large towns.

From the holding itself the gain can never be great, nor is any crofter ever likely to make his fortune as a crofter. But an industrious man, working his croft to the best advantage, and getting such occasional labour as has just been referred to, will not fail of a plain yet certain livelihood. His potato crop makes a staple article of diet for himself and his family all the year round. He will always have one or two stirks and horses to sell at the market. His wife can always obtain a price for her fowls and eggs. His sheep can be sold as mutton, and their fleeces provide good rough homespun for himself and his family. Family affection is very strong among the crofters, and the croft always offers a home for the daughters who are in service or the sons employed in Glasgow, when they have a holiday. They know that they are always welcome there, and that the homestead will never be wanting to them. To those who have studied the crofter nature, this is known to be a priceless boon. These and the advantages of an open air and natural life make the crofting system an attractive one. There are always plenty of applicants when a croft falls vacant, and the lot of the crofter would be envied by many a hard-driven slave in our large cities. As he thought over all these advantages, and considered the trouble of working a small farm, one crofter exclaimed, "We don't want your farms; all we want is a croft, whether it is ten shillings or a pound, we don't care. It's always a home, and we know that it is our own."

Social reformers have always and rightly desired

that the people of a country should have the opportunity of working on the land as a foil to the evils of society, and as a means of obtaining a livelihood in the manner of all our primitive ancestors for long generations. Whether this is likely to come about is still doubtful, but to all who are interested in such matters, as well as to all who love the simple life for itself, the crofting system offers a wide field for study and observation. Its disadvantages may seem great, but on the whole its benefits are much greater, and the recent measures of Parliament in its favour have at least set it on a firm basis.

The crofting township is familiar to all who have travelled through Skye, but for the sake of those who have not seen it, it is worth describing. Scattered along the roadside, or through the valley, or by the shore of a sea-loch, are a number of houses. Some of these are the low, thatched black houses already described. But, where the spirit of progress is active, many of them may be two storied cottages, with slate or iron roofs, large windows, chimneys, etc. If they are less picturesque than the more primitive structures, they are more in keeping with modern ideas of comfort. Where these have been built, they usually have an enclosed patch of garden in front, where vegetables and even flowers are growing. This is almost entirely wanting in the case of a black house, though one meets now and then with a tiny garden patch, sheltered by elder trees or rowans, planted there to keep off the spirits of evil. On the ground close by the township, usually on some sloping hillside, are the patches of arable ground, each patch belonging to an individual crofter. They are planted with oats or potatoes, the latter carefully weeded, the former not at all, and therefore almost always covered by yellow corn marigolds with which the stunted oats struggle for existence. Perhaps inherent conservatism may explain this. It never had been the custom to weed oats, and such a new-fangled invention as weeding

would be a reflection upon the spirit of the past; but potatoes, being themselves of modern growth, might be submitted to modern treatment! The various oblong or square patches, with different shades of green or yellow or gold, make up a kind of huge variegated carpet when seen from a distance, and lend an air of cheerfulness to the bare hillside or moorland. Beyond and around the township stretches the hill-grazing land, where the sheep and cattle are seen feeding. The old shieling system is a thing of the past, and the township no longer migrates to the uplands in summer to pasture their flocks. These are now consigned to the township herd, whose duty it is to see that they do not stray beyond the limits or to the patches of corn and potatoes.

As you pass through the township, quiet Celtic faces gaze at you or politely wish you "good-day." The men in rough homespun, the women in a short petticoat, with enormous boots, and, frequently, wearing a man's jacket, will be working in their patches, or gossiping in or out of doors, or struggling with an unruly colt or stirk. White-haired children are playing, barefooted and bareheaded; collie dogs rush after you with fiendish barks. Each crofter may keep one without paying a tax, and (it is said) usually keeps two or even three on the strength of this relaxation of the law. It may not be a very animated scene, but it has its own suggestion of quiet life and work, of industry after nature's heart. You are among people who depend almost entirely on old mother-earth for food and fuel. This is borne in upon you as you see the potato patches, or the cattle and sheep; above all, when you notice that each house has standing close by it a great stack of dried peats, cut by the crofter out of the moor, and supplying heat and, to a certain extent, light to his home. And all around the peaceful township (which no doubt knows its troubles and sorrows and heart-burnings like other communities, as well as its hopes

A CROFTING TOWNSHIP
(Old Style)

and joys) stretches the silent moor to the distant hills or the blue sea.[1]

[1] The statements made in this chapter have been based on my own inquiries, as well as the following indispensable works :— the volumes of the evidence taken before the Royal Commission, the *Report* of that Commission, the annual reports of the Crofters' Commission and the Congested Districts Board, the text of the Crofters' Holdings Acts from 1886 to 1891 (these will be found in a convenient form in a volume by Mr. C. N. Johnston, advocate, with introduction and notes). For the earlier history, Pennant's *Tour*, Stewart's *Sketches of the Highlanders*, MacCulloch's *Highlands and Western Isles*, Lord Selkirk's *Emigration*, the *Statistical Account*, Old and New, are also useful. I am also indebted to MacLeod of MacLeod and Mr. A. Hugh Douglas for facts relative to the MacLeod and Macdonald estates.

CHAPTER XVI

THE FOLK-LORE OF SKYE

"There is a natural sentiment and prepossession in favour of age, of ancestors, of barbarous and aboriginal usages, which is a homage to the element of necessity and divinity which is in them."—EMERSON.

THERE are always two elements in every religion. There are the higher divinities, and there are the multitude of lesser spirits, whom the mass of the people worship far more than they do the others. When a new religion is introduced, the higher gods disappear as such, but mostly the lesser spirits remain and are still worshipped by the people in spite of all that the new faith has taught them. Higher minds easily progress and readily accept and practise the tenets of the newer creed. Lower minds, representing the unchanging conservative element in every race, never do assimilate them, but go on pinning their faith to these ancient and primitive rituals and spirits as much as ever. In this way the Christianised Celts have continued to practise many of their ancient pagan customs, or have transformed the gods and spirits into demons or brownies, or have attributed to witches the powers once possessed by the Druids. Much of the folk-lore and many of the folk customs are directly borrowed from the religion of their pagan ancestors, or they belong to that still deeper stratum of belief in magic, which is to us so irrational, but which is the heritage of humanity from the most distant and primitive ages.

The folk-lore of the Celts has much the same

features, whether it is found in the Outer or Inner Hebrides, on the mainland, in Ireland or Wales, or in Brittany; but authentic instances of it collected in the Isle of Skye cannot fail to have their own value. In many of them we shall see trace of that primitive pagan element of which I have just spoken.

The ancient worship of the Sun is still commemorated in the common practice of circumambulating anything three times in the direction of the sun, the beneficent power, or by taking water to be used in charming and turning it three times round a lighted candle. This imitation of the action of the sun, called Deasil, is supposed to bring good-fortune as a matter of course. The ancient sun-god of the Celts was named Grannos, or sometimes Gruagach, the fair-haired. At one time this divinity must have been represented by rude stones of a certain size. Such stones still exist, and are called Gruagach stones. Two of them stand near the manse at Snizort, others at Holm, at Scorrybreck, and at Braes (MacQueen's Rock); while a writer on the Isle of Skye, in 1795, asserts that such stones are to be met with in every district. Not only so, but the people then were in the habit of pouring libations of milk upon these stones as an offering to Gruagach. It is not improbable that they may do so still. But in popular belief the fair-haired Gruagach was no longer the great sun-god, but a kindly brownie who helped, invisibly, in the work of farm or croft. Truly a god in exile, like Jupiter, Bacchus, and the rest in Heine's exquisite phantasy. But as the ancient gods had frequent amours with the daughters of men, so, as late as 1794, Gruagach was credited with being the father of a child born at Shulista, near Duntulm![1]

[1] The name Gruagach is sometimes applied to the Glaistig or Fairy Woman who haunts dairies. Indeed, the folk-lore of the two is inextricably mixed up. Both were doubtless divinities of pagan Celtdom, perhaps consorts. The Glaistig used to be seen at the ruined castle of Knock. There, and at Braes, libations of milk were poured out for her.

Another Gruagach at Tottrome, near Storr, killed a woman who had cursed him for his pranks. Certain superstitions seem to point to ancient moon-worship, or perhaps only to sympathetic magic. During the fortnight beginning with the new moon in June, no peats are stacked, because unless stacked with a waning moon they will give neither light nor heat, only "a power of smoke." Sheep and cows should always be killed at new moon, because they would shrink in the pot if killed under a waning moon.

In pagan times, wells and springs were believed to be inhabited by a spirit or divinity, who caused the waters to have healing properties to those who drank of them or bathed in them, at the same time propitiating the divinity with an offering. In Christian times, such useful properties could not be discarded, and the spirit of the well was still vaguely believed in, or his power was transferred to some local saint in whose charge the well was supposed to be. The ritual observed, the offering made, and the benefit expected are the same for the Christian Celt as for his pagan ancestors. Generally speaking, the invalid went round the well sunwise; then he drank of the waters, bathed in them, or washed his wound with them. Next he threw a small offering into the well —usually a piece of money, a pin, or some such trifling offering—and attached to a bush near by either some article of clothing or a rag. Perhaps these may represent more costly offerings made to the divinity of the well in earlier times; possibly they were left because they had once been in contact with the invalid, and now, being in touch with the spirit of the well, they would be a continual link between it and him, thus ensuring a blessing. Many such wells exist in Skye. Some are still resorted to secretly, and it is only a few years ago that some bush near by might have been seen covered with rags fluttering in the wind. A curious instance of a relic of combined tree and water worship is noted by the careful Martin. He refers to Loch Siant in

Kilmuir—a loch which I have, after much investigation, failed to discover, though possibly it may be Loch Sneosdal, a few miles north of Uig. Near it was a sacred well round which the invalids went three times after drinking its waters, leaving behind them scraps of clothing, coloured threads, coins, or pins. Beside this well was a copse, regarded with such awe that none would cut even the smallest twig from it, while the fish in the loch and the loch itself were both sacred. Well, loch, and copse were doubtless the relics of some ancient pagan place of worship, taboo to the pagan Celt, except under strict conditions, and whose sacredness has still remained after centuries of Christianity. This loch is referred to in an unpublished description of the Isle of Skye in the Advocates' Library, which tells how, if any ventured to cut the copse, he sickened or was visited "with some signal inconvenience."

This statement about the copse at Loch Siant shows the persistence of the belief in the sacredness of trees. They were themselves worshipped as the abode of spirits, or were sacred to certain divinities, just as a multiplicity of plants and herbs were. This belief is illustrated in the frequent occurrence of the elder, less frequently the rowan, growing beside crofters' huts in Skye. They afford protection to the home, to men, and to cattle, from the evil powers ever ready to injure humanity and their belongings. Parts of the rowan have the occult powers of the whole growing tree. A rowan wand placed over the door of barn or byre keeps off witches and evil spirits; a twig bound in a circlet and placed beneath a vessel of milk prevents its being spirited away; while a fire of rowan-wood is three times sacred. From classical sources we know that the Celts ascribed magical powers to certain plants, *e.g.* the mistletoe and the club-moss, when gathered with attention to an ordered ritual. The club-moss is still regarded in Brittany with awe, and the ancient ritual in gathering it also survives. We need not

wonder, then, that many plants are still sacred to the Celt. Among others which have both medical and occult powers are the water-cress (biolair), the ivy, the bramble, the figwort, St. John's wort, the bog-violet. The figwort has the power of ensuring a supply of milk when placed in the byre; St. John's wort wards off enchantments, the evil-eye, even death itself, besides bringing plenty to house and field and fold. But it must be accidentally found, and ought to be placed secretly in a woman's bodice or a man's waistcoat under the armpit to ensure luck, for did not the blessed Columcille himself carry it thus?

Traces of agricultural magic, of the ancient worship of the powers of life and growth, are seen in the custom of taking the last sheaf cut at harvest and hanging it within the house over the doorway to ensure luck for the coming year. This corn-maiden, Maighdean-Bhuana, was once believed to hold the divine life of the corn. Hence it was of the utmost importance to secure it and all its life and luck-bringing powers, so that, at next sowing time, the precious grains of this sheaf might be mixed with the bulk of the seed-corn as an invigorating force. Another custom at harvest has less obvious connection with the ancient creed. The crofter who first completes the cutting of his fields makes a sheaf into the fanciful likeness of an old woman, and places it in the unfinished field of his neighbour. This Ghobhar Bhacach, or lame goat, is naturally the cause of much shame and humiliation to the crofter who is unlucky enough to have it set up in his land. Perhaps the custom arose from some gradual misunderstanding of the purpose of the Maighdean-Bhuana.

So far these customs are relics of the more wholesome side of the ancient religion. But the hated demons, the spirits who brought storm and darkness and evil, who were feared and detested, have also remained, probably little changed, and hardly

even associated with or transformed into the devil and his imps, as has so often happened elsewhere. We may see traces of them in the water-bulls, water-horses, and kelpies which are said to haunt so many lochs and streams. The two former have the ordinary animal appearance, but are of a vast size, and naturally are very terrifying to the scared beholder. They pursue him, and when they catch him, carry him beneath the waters to satisfy their hunger. Foals and calves of a highly spirited temper are known to owe their male parentage to these demoniac animals. But they could also change their shape, appearing even in human guise, and luring the unwary traveller to the loch-side, where they resumed their awful form when it was too late for him to flee. The nearer of the two Storr lochs, Loch Fada, is known to be haunted by a water-bull; it was also the haunt of a water-horse, slaughtered with a knife after it had killed a man. Loch nan Dubhrachan, between Isle Ornsay and Knock, was also tenanted by a water-horse. As this latter loch is close to the high road, which here runs through a lonely part of the island, it is not to be wondered at that it is an object of local terror. The water-horse had a *penchant* for pretty girls, but they did not like his attentions. No young woman would venture near Loch Sgubaidh in Strath (where dwelt a water-horse), lest he should rush out and carry her off. In the wild Coolin Hills is a wilder corrie called Coire-nan-Uraisg, or corrie of the monster — a fearful shape, half-human, half-goat, with long hair, long teeth and claws. Fortunately for the Skyemen, this corrie is too far removed from the haunts of men for its grisly inhabitant to do much harm.

It is but seldom, as has been said, that such beings are connected with the devil, but of him some curious stories are told. In old days a certain officer in Skye make a compact with Satan, who, at the time appointed, was to meet his victim at a

certain place. In order to prevent his being carried off, the wise soldier took with him a dozen others, armed with guns and swords, hoping to beat off the arch-enemy. One of them, scenting danger in the enterprise, loitered behind, pretending to be ill, and when the others were out of sight, quietly returned home. But as for the soldier and his friends, nothing was ever heard or seen of them again. It takes a long spoon to sup with the devil!

In the fairies (in whom the Skyeman, like his fellow-Celts, believes so strongly, proving their existence, like that of witches, from the Bible) we may see a set of beings standing midway between the survivals of the beneficent and those of the harmful powers, and partaking part of the nature of both. The Skye fairies do not differ much from the fairies of other places. They are a small race, dressed always in green; they live in knolls known by the greenness of their grass, or (as in Ireland) in duns; and from these they emerge at night to dance and sport to the music of the pipes on the sward and heath. Fortunate persons, like a certain man at Staffin, have listened to their ravishing music. He heard it at Flodigarry, "and och, it was beautiful, whatever!" nor, as he said, was he ever so jolly in his life. Another man, less wise, was enticed by them to take part in their dance. Probably it was the irresistible reel. But at the end of it, though it had seemed to be no more than a day, he found he had danced for a whole year.[1] The fairies in a kindly mood will do all the work of a house in a single night. But he for whom they work must provide employment for them

[1] I have recently heard of a boy who saw a lot of people, little and big, dancing near Dunvegan manse. Next moment all had vanished. He and those to whom he told the tale had no doubt they were fairies. Hallucinatory appearances are often suggested by, or take form from, preconceived ideas and beliefs. This is probably a case in point.

continually, as, like Michael Scott's familiar spirits, they do their work so swiftly that they are always asking for more. Another man at Flodigarry was troubled with their assiduous attentions, and went to an old crofter, a wise man, to take his advice. He bade him give the fairies a sieve, and tell them to scoop up the sea with it—a task which they have not completed yet, and thus he got rid of them. The fairies who lived in Dun Borve, near Portree, were got rid of by their bored host crying, "Dun Borve is on fire," and away they rushed to put out the flames. This is a tale with many local variants all through the Highlands.

The usual stories are told of grown people being carried off into the fairy hill, where time lapsed as in a dream, of thefts from fairyland, and of infants stolen away, and an ugly changeling like a withered old man, with a giant's appetite, left behind. To prevent an unbaptized infant being stolen (for they were in especial danger), the tongs were set upright by the cradle and an oatcake put across the child's feet.[1] The reason alleged was that the fairies would think the tongs were a human being—a curious distortion of the well-known fairy taboo against the use of iron. In addition to this, no child should be taken out of doors before baptism.

Several places in Skye are noted as haunts of the fairy folk: Fairy Bridge on the way to Dunvegan; a fairy knowe close by the inn at Broadford; Dun Gharsainn overlooking the head of Loch Beag at Totardair, in Struan; the Sithein (fairy dwelling) of the Pretty Hill at Braes, from which sounds of ravishing music have been heard; and the Piper's Hollow at Borreraig. Dun Gharsainn is the seat of an ancient fort which afterwards became, or perhaps always was, a fairy bower. From it the fairies sallied forth to dance on the hillside in the moon-

[1] A similar practice was used in Scandinavia to prevent children being stolen by dwarfs. Thorpe, *Northern Mythology*, ii. 2.

light. One day a foolish fellow destroyed their bower when they were absent helping the queen of Blaaven to make a tartan suit for her son, who was to wed a king's daughter. Only one fairy woman remained at home ill, when the fellow began to take away the stones of the bower to build a fold for his cattle. Then an unearthly light shone forth and mysterious voices were heard, threatening this mortal with dire vengeance. But the fairies were never seen again, save one who returned at intervals to weep over this once happy bower. The site of this fairy home had been well chosen: far below is the meadow land and the winding loch, opening into fair Loch Bracadale, and presenting to the view lofty headlands, gleaming seas, and purple islands on the horizon. And all this was lost to the fairies for the sake of a few stones!

The Macrimmons of Borreraig were the hereditary pipers of MacLeod, and possessed a celebrated chanter, which was known far and wide as "the silver chanter of the fairy woman." Once upon a time, Ian Og Macrimmon was practising his music in the Piper's Hollow (Slochd nam Piobairean) in Borreraig. There, as he played, the fairy queen appeared from a knoll near by, and addressed him in poetry—

"Thy manly beauty and the sweetness of thy pipe music
Have brought thee a fairy sweetheart;
Now I give thee this silver chanter,
Which, touched by thy finger, will never lack sweetest music."

Thus Ian Og won the love of the fairy queen, and blew such strains from his pipes as had never been heard in the Isle of Skye.

There are particular kinds of fairies, like the Bean-nigh, or washer of the ford, who appears when someone is about to die, washing his shroud and singing his woeful dirge. So much is she taken up with this work, that she may be captured, and then

must grant her captor three wishes. A ghillie of Macdonald of the Isles saw her washing a shroud in Benbecula. He held her tightly, and forced her to tell him whose shroud it was, to grant him that he should marry whoever his heart desired, and to promise that there should always be plenty of sea-ware in the loch by his house. When he heard that it was his chief's shroud, and that he would never leave nor return to Benbecula, he threw it far into the loch, and rushed off with the dreaded information. When his chief heard the news, he had a cow slaughtered (perhaps as a propitiatory sacrifice), and his galley got ready. Then, hasting to Skye, he never again returned to the fatal island, and thus broke the fairy spell.

The fairies, here as elsewhere, keep herds of cattle, which, however, will only graze on certain spots. Thus the cows which lived with their fairy mistress in the ruined Dun Ghearra-Sheader, a mile from Portree, went all the way to pasture at Achnahannait, in Braes. The fairy has been seen at twilight, standing on the dun and calling them home in a rhyme still recited among the people. Other fairy cattle live under the waves in

> "Sand-strewn caverns, cool and deep,
> Where the winds are all asleep,
> Where the sea-beasts, ranged all round,
> Feed in the ooze of their pasture-ground,"

but occasionally emerge to improve the breed of the common or land cow! To prevent their return, earth, and especially earth from a churchyard, is thrown between them and the sea. This was done to the cattle which came ashore at MacNicol's Rock on Scorrybreck farm, and a voice was heard at night calling them home in vain.

On the whole, fairies are now seldom seen, though people may be still afraid of seeing them. They have gradually disappeared on account of the spread of gospel truth, as one old woman suggested; the

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Bible is a well-known charm against fairies, just as iron is![1] Fairy Bridge is no longer haunted by *the people of peace* since the well-known minister, who is still remembered as the Apostle of the North, held a preaching there. But if fairies do not abound, stories about them do, and are firmly believed in.

The mermaid, like the sea-serpent, is still seen by the credulous islesmen. She is called Maighdean na Tuinne, maid of the wave. A Skyeman said to me, "Ach! I believe there will be such creatures myself, as there are horses with men's heads in distant lands. I will have seen a picture of *them*, whatever." He had seen a drawing of the classical centaur probably. One of MacLeod's retainers, resting on the steep cliff above the Maidens, near which a reef of rock runs out into the sea, saw a mermaid combing her tresses. "I lifted my gun," said he, "meaning to shoot her, for I thought if I got her I could carry her round the country, and myself would be a rich man. And then I put down the gun, for I thought she's so humanlike that if I shoot her I will be hanged. And so I kept lifting it and putting it down, until, plop, the merry-maid took one dive and disappeared into the sea." Another islesman at Kyle-rhea gave out that he saw the sea-serpent. "Yes, yes, one day I saw the fearful head of the beast go down the Kyle, and indeed it was a week after before his tail had passed!"

So much for supernatural beings. There are human beings also with supernatural powers, and in these witches we may see the lineal descendants of the Druids and Druidesses whose magical powers kept the pagan Celts in awe. There are white witches, for the most part harmless, and there are black witches, feared almost like the plague. I know one of either sort. The white witch confines

[1] An Ulsterman alleged the same reason—the spreading abroad of so much Scripture, for the disappearance of the fairies. Wood-Martin, *Elder Faiths of Ireland*, ii. 4.

herself to telling fortunes, and my friend will heartily scold the luckless servant-girl who is frivolous enough to laugh at her when she is reading the leaves in a teacup. Black witches have darker powers, and of these some account must be given. It is commonly believed, of course, that they are in league with the devil, who gave them their power; but, as one informant told me, there are but few of them now and their power is going from them, *i.e.* education is driving superstition away. Of all their powers none is so widely known and feared as that of the evil-eye. With it they can "overlook" cattle, horses, and human beings, so that they pine and die, or, in the case of cows, their milk goes from them. But others besides witches are credited with this dire gift. Envious persons, strongly desiring something of their neighbours, can harm it through the very strength of their desire. A man was ploughing when a passer-by stopped and admired his horse. By ill-fortune the horse soon after began to shiver, and dropped down dead, and nothing could persuade the crofter that this other man, through envy, had not overlooked his horse. This crofter is still living, and is not an old man. When a man or woman has been overlooked, he or she feels uncomfortable, shivers, yawns, and is very sick. The face is drawn and pinched. Cows, as we have seen, lose their milk. The cure is traditionally handed down, from male to female, and from female to male, so it is said; and, as my informant remarked, "I have seen it done many a time." Water is taken from a stream dividing two properties, in some districts only in a wooden not a metal dish. It is poured into a vessel containing seven cutting implements, as well as gold or silver, or both; a charm is said over it; sometimes it is passed *deasil* round the flame of a candle. Then the human patient must drink the water; in the case of the cow, it suffices to throw it over its body, and put some in its mouth, the operator saying, "In the

Name of Jesus Christ." What remains over is carefully thrown out on some fixed stone. Certain plants, as we have seen, are also herbs of grace against the power of the evil-eye. Such witches are naturally too much feared for any revenge to be taken upon them, but as late as 1775 a remnant of the frightful legal witch persecutions is found in Skye. Prosecutions were attempted before the kirk session against witches for carrying off milk from cows by the fascination of the evil-eye. Even in 1881 a Free Church elder at Uig tried to induce a justice of the peace to issue a warrant against a woman whom he accused of the same crime. Superstition does die hard, and has more lives than a cat!

The evil-eye is a species of cursing and malediction which in itself may come from several causes—*e.g.*, some unholy deed having been enacted will lay a whole district under a curse. Only in 1900, when it was sought to remove the crofters of Sconser to better land in the south of Skye, among the printed reasons alleged by them for remaining in their unhealthy township, and presented by their agent to the Crofters' Commission, was this, that the ground was cursed because of former evictions which had taken place there, and therefore it was impossible to expect them to settle on it.

The witch, or indeed any evilly disposed person, like the sorcerers of every age and race, used sympathetic magic to destroy their victims. An image of the victim was made of clay, and because it had a certain resemblance to him (likeness denoting real connection), it was believed that whatever was done to the image would produce a similar effect on the person whom it represented. Having been stuck full of pins (to produce real aches and pains), it was laid in running or dropping water, and as it gradually wasted away, so it was hoped would the victim. He, doubtless, as credulous as his enemy, would actually be affected by dint of suggestion, did he hear of the image having been made and treated thus, just

as the West African negro, as Miss Kingsley says, will die through fear of a poisonous idea as well as from real poison. Recent instances of this in Skye are well known. Lord Macdonald's factor, Mackinnon of Corrie, had such an image of himself made by a crofter with a grievance. It was found in a barn near his house. A friend, to whom I owe this instance, told me that when he was resident in the West Indies such an image of himself was made by a negro. So do the ends of the earth meet together! Sympathetic magic is again found in the method employed by some witches (notably a very "wicked" one who lived forty years ago near Portree) to destroy offending fishermen. Pieces of egg-shell, representing each a boat, were set floating in a cup of water. Then the witch, with what malicious leer and curse as we may imagine, thrust one or more of the pieces below the surface in order that the sea might similarly swallow up her enemies. Black magic this, in good sooth, but again it is curious to note that a method exactly like this, save that the egg-shell was replaced by models of ships, was used by the ancient Egyptians to destroy an enemy's fleet![1]

The Skye witches, like the ancient Druids and the Celtic priestesses of the Isle of Sena, whom Pytheas saw, and like witches everywhere, had the power of shape-shifting or transformation, and many are the stories told of this strange gift—some ancient, some modern. Two hundred years ago, a MacLeod of Raasay had made himself particularly obnoxious to the Skye and Raasay witches by his severe penalties dealt out to them. When he was crossing the narrow channel between Portree Bay and Raasay, one of them, in the shape of a cat, with a number of her fellows similarly transformed, clambered on the lee gunwale and stays. Their weight upset the boat, and the chief was drowned, while they swam triumphantly to shore. A cat was,

[1] Budge, *Egyptian Magic*, p. 91 *seq.*

in fact, a common shape for a witch to take. A crofter in Sleat was much annoyed by a black cat which sneaked into his house and stole the cream—never a very plentiful dainty in Skye. It was caught, and one of its ears cut off. A few days after, it was noticed that an old woman, living near by, had lost an ear. She it was who had suffered in cat form, and ever after, to hide her shame, she kept her head covered with a shawl. One of Lord Macdonald's gamekeepers believed firmly that witches could take the shape of a hare, and always prophesied ill-luck when a shooting-party saw one on setting out for the hill.[1] Another story of shape-shifting has its *locale* in Vaternish. Some fishermen there were much troubled by a whale which used to come dashing among their nets, so that they lost their fish and had their nets torn. After enduring its depredations for a time, they determined to take steps to destroy it. Armed with various weapons, they gave chase when next it appeared. One of them hurled a three-pronged potato fork at the whale, wounding it severely. It disappeared. Next morning news went round that a certain woman, reputed to be a witch, and to whom these very fishermen had done some injury, was lying in great agony, and soon afterwards she died. Her body was examined, and three ugly wounds were found in her side. It was never doubted that she had transformed herself into a whale, and in that form had tormented her enemies and met her death at their hands. *Post hoc, propter hoc!* Only a few years ago a distinguished anthropologist was told by one of the guides at Sligachan that a friend of his, going home one night, saw a foal standing on a dyke. It

[1] I heard a story of this kind from Sutherland the other day. The father of the ghillie who told it saw a hare which never could be shot. Keeping his own counsel, he melted down a shilling into a bullet. Poor puss was hit by this coin of vantage, and disappeared into a cottage. There an old woman was found in bed with a sore leg. The conclusion was obvious.

attacked him and knocked him down. In vain he struggled with it, until his dog bit it. Now to draw a witch's blood makes her harmless, and compels her to speak to you. The foal spoke to the man with a human voice. It was a girl whom he had first courted and then neglected, and now she upbraided him for his fickleness. *Mon âne parle, et même il parle bien!* History does not tell the sequel; let us hope that the course of true love ran smooth at last.

But the witch could also exert her powers in a beneficent direction, though still by magical means. It is commonly believed that the adder, when it wishes to change its skin, bores a hole in a stone, and then drags its body through, leaving the skin behind. Such stones are as rare as they are valuable, and the people believe that they are powerful amulets in the witches' hands for purposes of healing. Certain stones of a pyramidal shape found near sacred wells are useful, when "infused" in water, for curing horses of worms. Such a stone long lay in the ruined altar of the chapel on Fladdahuan, an island off the north of Skye. It was always moist, and fishermen seeking a favourable wind would walk round the chapel sunwise, and then pour water over the stone, when they obtained the wind they sought. This stone had also the usual disease-curing properties.

It was also possible for a witch to put what may be best described as an invisible magic armour round a person in order to ward off all injury from him. This occult armour was called "sian," and it is said that a woman in Bernisdale put it on MacLeod of Berneray, in Harris, when he passed through Skye on his way to join the Prince. At Culloden the bullets showered on him like hail, yet he was uninjured. Having thrown off his coat in the flight from the fatal field, he was told by his foster-brother, who picked it up, that it was riddled with holes made by the bullets.

Others beside the witch had supernatural powers of different kinds. Divination by means of a sheep's shoulder-blade was one of these. It is a practice used everywhere, *e.g.*, by Red Indians and by Arabs. The custom was to scrape the bone, *not* with metal; then it was held at arm's length against the light, and the seer divined the unknown from certain marks which his practised eye saw in it. A person in Skye thus saw and described the defeat of the Prince's army at Culloden at the very hour when it took place, and many other instances of less historical note are known.

The gift of healing resides in a seventh son. Quite recently some children were "healed" in Portree. The healer, a man from the Long Island, obtained some water from a holy well; took the children into a darkened room; went through some mysterious ritual known to himself alone; and then dismissed the children to their expectant parents. They recovered soon after; probably they would have done so in any case. But the healer's reputation is made, and he will have many cases in time to come.

Of all occult qualities that of the "taisch" or second-sight is the most widely known. The gifted person found it a painful quality, but he was an agent powerless to help himself against the coming of the vision, like Alan Macaulay in *A Legend of Montrose*. Generally speaking, it was believed to be an inborn gift which could not be taught, but opinions differed as to this, and a correspondent of the seventeenth-century folk-lorist, Aubrey, told him that in Skye anyone could be taught the second-sight for the remuneration of a pound of tobacco. The visions seen were of different kinds; mostly they were concerned with the immediate future; usually the person whose wraith was seen by the clairvoyant died soon after.

A woman in Skye frequently saw a double of herself walking close by her. To make sure that it was her own double, she went out on different

days in different articles of dress, which she found to be exactly copied by her spectral companion. This was, of course, regarded as a warning of her speedy death. The same thing happened, many years ago, to a dairy-maid at Greshornish. She tested the apparition by reversing part of her dress, and when next she saw it, the same change was visible. Soon after she sickened of fever and died. Many instances occur of the appearance of some person's double to the seer, followed by that person's death. A poor woman had a vision of her son falling over one of the high seacliffs at Uig with a lamb, and heard him exclaim, "This is a fatal lamb for me." She warned her son against going near Uig, for they lived at some distance from that village. But one day he went there and helped a farmer to separate the lambs from their mothers. A lamb ran away; the young man rushed after it. Before he caught it he had reached the edge of a cliff, where he slipped with the lamb in his grasp. The farmer ran to his assistance, and heard him call out, as he disappeared, the very words his mother had heard a month before. Before he could help him, the lad had rolled down the cliff to the ravine below and was killed. In this instance the seer heard as well as saw, and her auditory and visual experience was noted down by the parish minister at once, and before the fulfilment. This minister was at first a sceptic on the subject of second-sight, but after noting many such visions which afterwards came to pass as real events, he was driven to admit that some people had the gift.[1] In every case the vision was unsought, and the gift was unwelcome.

Cases are known in which there was no spectral vision. John MacLeod saw a former minister of Duirinish dwindle away to the size of a child, and then recover his natural size, like Alice in Wonderland. It is not said whether John had been drinking, but

[1] See a paper in the *Journal of the Caledonian Medical Society* for 1897 by his son, Dr. Alastair Macgregor.

soon after the minister sickened and died. In other cases a dream foretold an event yet unheard of. The same John dreamt that a man came and told him of the death of George II., which news was corroborated by the same day's post. Perhaps John had received prior information. An old man, well educated and well read, who lived near Portree, and died in 1902, maintained that he saw a coffin lying near the house of an old woman, where no coffin should be. He tapped it with his stick. It sounded hollow. Next day the coffin was gone, and soon after the woman died.

The treatise on the second-sight by Theophilus Insulanus (the pseudonym of MacLeod of Hamera, in Glendale) was published in 1763, and is full of alleged instances of clairvoyance in Skye. The author was very credulous, but to the psychologist and folk-lorist his book is a rich treasure. The cases he mentions resolve themselves mainly into five groups:—1. visions of a winding-sheet wrapped round a person to whom the seer is talking; 2. visions of the corpse of someone known or unknown; 3. visions of a person drowning or dying by some accidental means; 4. auditory hallucinations, as hearing a carpenter hammering at a coffin in a room where no carpenter is visible (*Quære*, How did the clairaudient know it was a coffin?); 5. someone is seen to dwindle to the size of a child, and then resume his usual height. All these instances are followed by the death of the person seen, sometimes by that of the seer. One case mentioned by Theophilus is worth quoting for its local colour:—Lieutenant Keith and some other guests staying at Dunvegan Castle had gone down to the change-house (its ruins stand half a mile north of the castle), like Baron Bradwardine and his friends, to make a night of it. There Keith was taken ill and died in his chair. The inn-keeper declared he had seen him dead three hours before the event—the first time he had been aware of his powers as a seer, while Donald MacLeod of Feorlig

had seen the poor lieutenant dwindle to the size of a boy. "Both seers are still willing to make oath to the premises," says Theophilus, and no doubt they were.

A well-known story in Skye is that of the minister who, not long ago, walking on a lonely road, saw a phantasmal funeral. It presaged his own decease, which took place a few days later. Here is an interesting case which I heard from the friend of the woman who had the gift. "It was very trying to her." One day, visiting a neighbour, she fainted. On coming to, she was pressed to tell the reason, but refused. Subsequently she acknowledged that she had seen the corpse of a boy, who was then ploughing in a field near by. This boy died within the week. The woman had many such visions, but they were disliked by her, a not uncommon trait in the seer wherever found, just as even the willing mystic had to undergo the dread pains of "the dark night of the soul." But it is possible to get rid of the gift if it is coped with in due time. When the seer has had his first vision, let him tell it to a friend who meanwhile turns the leaves of a Bible rapidly over before his face. He will be troubled with no further visions. My informant had herself some curious experiences. She had often heard, in her little shop, the mysterious sound of scissors cutting cotton, as if for a shroud, before a death in the neighbourhood. Two men saw an oilskin coat lying on her counter begin to move up and down in a mysterious manner; they watched its movements in awed silence. Presently all was explained: a girl came in saying that so-and-so was dead, and she wanted cotton for his shroud. The dead man's spirit had acted on the coat *à distance*, by way of giving notice of his death (his procedure was a failure), or was it simply—rats?

The explanation of such widespread phenomena, or perhaps of the underlying delusion (or reality if you will) which has everywhere produced similar

phenomena, is, like many another occult affair, still to seek, and baffles the psychologist and psychical researcher. Well may Dante Rossetti sing of "the bitterness of things occult!"

Connected with such visual premonitions are the more material omens of death. It is not uncommon, when there is not enough wood for a coffin, to take some of the boards from the wooden partition which divides every crofter's house in two, in order to supply the deficiency. Before the death occurs, or is even thought of, these very boards are seen to shake. Then it is known that death will soon seek out a victim from that house. Mrs. M—— herself told me that she ascribed pains in her hands to the fact that within a few days after she had to carry into the church the trestles on which a coffin was to rest. In this case the effect preceded the cause, contrary to all rules of philosophy! But more curious still is the persistence of taboos in connection with touching the dead which must have prevailed among the pagan Celts, and which are common among all races, *e.g.*, to mention no others, the ancient Jews and the modern Polynesians. When the coffin has been carried out of a house, it is usual for anything on which it has rested, or which it has touched, to be taken outside, washed, and then turned upside down. By this means the contagion of death, or any possibility of the spirit clinging to its old home, is removed. Here, again, is an *authentic* ghost story:—A fisherman's recently made widow in Sleat one stormy night saw her husband enter their cottage in dripping oilskins, go to the fireplace, and from it remove a brick. Then with a gesture of farewell he disappeared. Underneath the brick his savings, of which she knew nothing, had been hidden. He had returned from the unknown to reveal them to her.

Another venerable custom still holds good. When anyone is found dead, a cairn is *secretly* erected on the spot, nor is it ever known who erects it. There

is such a cairn on the road near Struan, where a woman was found dead from exposure to a storm four years ago, and another stands on the road to Vaternish, beyond Fairy Bridge. We know that the ancient Celts had a similar practice, in the case of someone dying who was much admired, while every passer-by added a stone to his cairn.[1] In Skye it has dwindled down to the commemoration of persons found dead, and perhaps there is some underlying idea of preventing the ghost haunting the spot by appeasing it with this monument.

I shall conclude this chapter with a few unconsidered trifles of Skye folk-lore.

Some curious taboos are found. You should never row in front of the fishing-boats when they are going out. They will have no luck, or something worse may happen. Women especially caused ill-luck to the fishing when they crossed from Skye to Harris. This was limited to those times when MacLeod returned after a long absence to Dunvegan Castle, when, as a result of his return, there were always plenty of herrings in the loch. On the other hand, you should never give a woman a needle without the thread in it, because that would cause her, when she marries, never to have any children.

It is commonly believed that when anyone commits suicide by drowning, fish at once leave the loch for two or three years. The lack of fish in more than one Skye loch is attributed to suicides which have taken place in them recently. Again, it is considered ominous for a shrew-mouse to run over a cow or sheep, for the animal will soon turn ill and die. The idea has passed into a proverb, and it is common to say of anyone who has failed in some undertaking, "A shrew-mouse has crossed him." Deformity is not considered unlucky, however much it may detract from personal beauty, for it is thought that a deformed child will bring fortune to his family.

[1] Cf. the Kafir custom of depositing a stone at certain places connected with ancestor worship.

So a child, born with two teeth, will certainly become a bard.[1]

When a knife falls or a feather is seen adhering to a dog's nose, that means that a stranger is coming to pay you a visit.

The following beliefs concerning the chiefs of the MacLeods are curious. Fish were supposed to be plentiful in Dunvegan Loch when the chief took up his residence in the castle. But the luck must have changed, for now the chief's fisherman will frequently toil all day and take nothing save a little flounder or whiting! The St. Kildans believe that the cuckoo only appears in their remote island when their laird dies. The factor who arrived there by the first steamer which touched at St. Kilda in the season of 1895, was eagerly greeted with the question, "Is MacLeod dead, for we have heard the cuckoo?" This was in May; the chief died in February, and no news had reached the islanders from the outer world since the previous summer. Again, when the chief is in trouble, balls of light are seen dancing high in air on the shore near Dunvegan Castle.

The aborigines of most lands are popularly believed by the peasantry to have been giants. So it is thought in Skye, and at Kilmuir is a wide space of ground, formerly enclosed, and known as Fingal's Graves. The graves, which may really be Norse barrows, are about 14 feet long, and were made for the "big people." And as my informant, an old man full of folk-lore, said: "Nobody will be knowing when these big people came to Skye, and before *they* came there was nobody here at all. And they *were* the big people!" It is commonly believed that underneath the cairn on the top of Ben-na-Cailleach at Broadford, rests a Norse princess. Now Pennant, in his *Tour*, mentions a legend current then, which approximates to the old man's story of Kilmuir, to the effect that the cairn covers the place

[1] On the Gold Coast such a child and his mother would be put to death as uncanny.

of sepulture of a gigantic woman of the days of Fingal.[1] "There were giants in those days," as the Hebrew writer says of the times before the Flood, and the Skyeman is in entire accord with him on this subject.

As a rule, the younger people give a doubtful assent to these folk-customs and folk-beliefs. Some they believe more or less; others they dismiss with, "It used to be so in the old days, but it does not happen now." And usually they preface any item of folk-belief with the words, "The old people say it." The march of education and the School Board system have deprived the world of much of the romantic. *Das Aberglaube ist die Poesie des Lebens.* But many of the superstitions of the past were as cruel as they were romantic, and if we regret the advent of the radical newspaper, cheap finery, shallow ambitions, and twentieth-century ways in these glens of Skye, the haunts of ancient peace, we may console ourselves by thinking that they have driven off evils quite as bad.

[1] *Tour in Scotland*, p. 329.

CHAPTER XVII

ANTIQUITIES

"Old, unhappy, far-off things."—WORDSWORTH.

SKYE has so much the air of antiquity in itself, its shaggy moorlands and wrinkled rocks and venerable hills give it such an air of hoary eld, of old, unhappy, far-off things, that it seems needless to speak of its professed antiquities. Yet there they are, and they give to this grey old island just that link of connection with the forgotten generations of humanity who have dwelt within it, which is necessary to complete its charm. Like the unnumbered waves which have beaten on its rocky shores and left their mark on broken cliff and battered headland, or like the glaciers of long past ages which grooved and furrowed the mountain sides as they came and went, so the generations of men who knew Skye as their home through the dim centuries have left some tokens of their lives, of their doings, of their wars, of their aspirations. The story of these may be spelt out in the crumbling ruins of house and dun, castle and church, and in the unconsidered trifles found from time to time in the earth. Hardly any competent antiquary has taken the trouble to investigate the old relics of Skye. I add this chapter to my book in the hope that from it some of them may learn what treasures Skye contains, and may visit and examine them before time has finally destroyed them.

1. *Stone Circles.*

There have been several stone circles in Skye, but time and the hand of man have contrived to destroy

them. The sites remain known, and in a few cases part of the stones themselves are left, but one seeks in vain here for the perfection of such remains as are found in Argyllshire. Such insignificant remains are still to be found at Uig, and at Kilbride and Borreraig, both in Strath. The two latter are within a few miles of each other, and close by the former stood an early Celtic church; here as elsewhere the Christian temple occupied the sacred site of paganism.

Monoliths are only occasionally met with. There is one in the churchyard at Trumpan, 5 feet in height. On one side and near the top is a small hole 1½ inch in diameter, to which people were led blindfolded. If they succeeded in putting their finger in the hole, they would go straight to heaven at death; otherwise they would be kept a long time in purgatory. The stone is locally known as the Priest's Stone. Two stones stand on the shore opposite Snizort manse. Once they were three in number, and on them, says legend, was set the cauldron in which was cooked Finn MacCoul's (Fingal's) supper! A little beyond Uilinish House are three similar stones, and tradition has connected them with the burning of the dead in early times. Recently a crofter dug up a small urn containing ashes near one of them. Other stones are referred to by earlier writers, but they have mostly disappeared.[1] Circles and monoliths alike mark the last resting-places of the dead; and as the dead were worshipped, we may see in them, without accepting all the nonsense written about the Druids, places of primitive worship and sacrifice.

2. *Tumuli.*

Tumuli are more numerous, but they have mostly been opened, recklessly one fears, and they are now

[1] See Martin, *Western Isles*, p. 152, for one at Uig, and *Origines Parochiales*, p. 344, for Clach na h Annait at Kilchrist, an "obelisk" close by the well of the same name, and evidently of sacred character.

little but rough heaps of stone, with little trace of their original form. Carn Liath, on the high seaboard above St. Columba's Loch in Kilmuir, is a large heap of stones, 15 yards in diameter. In the centre is a pit, 6 feet in depth, and on one side what looks like the remains of another chamber. In these the urns were placed, and we must suppose them covered with slabs of stone, over which smaller stones were piled.

Remains of a cairn of the more usual chambered type exist near Uilinish House. Part of a passage formed of low walls covered with slabs or blocks of stone is exposed to view. It probably led to an inner vaulted chamber. This has disappeared, as well as the great bulk of the stones which formed the actual cairn.

Several tumuli which seem to be more of the type of Carn Liath are to be found on the peninsula of Vatten, south of the highroad between Caroy and Roag. Three of these are of considerable size, and give evidence of containing several chambers ; the others are smaller, but are numerous. Here must have been a burial-place of the early inhabitants, though tradition (wrongly) speaks of it as marking the site of a battle between Macdonalds and MacLeods, where the slain were covered with heaps of stone. Such clan fights belong to a later date, when the art of tumulus-building had long become extinct.[1]

Some of the articles found in other cairns have been recorded. Urns were discovered in cairns at Snizort, and in the same parish a cairn contained a coffin, formed of slabs of stone, within which was an urn of burnt clay with "carving." On the topmost slab lay the handle of a weapon and a pin, 7 inches long.[2] A similar urn of red clay, notched and scalloped, was found near the parish church of Duirinish ;[3] while another, containing burnt bones and a copper coin, came to light in digging the

[1] See p. 93.
[2] *Old Statistical Account*, *s.v.* Snizort.
[3] *New Statistical Account*, p. 336

foundations of the manse at Kilbride. The tumuli in the same parish (of Strath) are known to have contained urns, while near Broadford a cairn has an arched vault or chamber, 6 feet deep, the top of which was covered by a flat stone. In this lay a buckle and a dark green polished stone, now in the Antiquarian Museum, Edinburgh.[1]

3. *Beehive Cells and other Small Dwellings.*

The beehive hut consists of "a circular or oval building constructed of uncemented stones, and so arranged that each layer overlaps the one beneath it, till the opening becomes so small, at the apex, as to be closed in by one stone."[2] Such single rude dwellings were often made more complex by connecting two or more by means of low passages, or by surrounding the circular chamber with a gallery. In their rudest form they are frequently found in Celtic Britain; the highest examples of this primitive form of architecture are the tombs of Mycenæ. I have noticed several remains of such structures in Skye. It is doubtless to these that Martin refers when he speaks of stone houses in Skye, "above ground, capable of only one person, and round in form. . . . They are called Teig-uin-Druinich, or Druids' houses"; druinich, he says, meaning a retired person given to contemplation.[3] The Gaelic term, whatever its meaning, is applied loosely, for it is more usually given to the earth-houses of which I shall speak presently. These beehive cells formed the residences of monks in primitive Celtic communities, and there is little doubt that the abundant stones on the site of the monastery at Kilmuir are the débris of many huts of this kind.[4]

Immediately west of the monastery, on what was once the shore of the loch, and underneath Carn

[1] The positions of these and other cairns are marked on the Ordance Survey maps.

[2] Munro, *Prehistoric Scotland*, p. 336.

[3] *Western Isles*, p. 154.

[4] See p. 277.

Liath, is a rudely circular building about 5 yards in diameter, made of large uncemented blocks rudely squared. At the south-west side is a smaller chamber, built on to the larger and connected with it by an opening in the wall of the latter. It probably served as a sleeping-place. The ruined walls of the structure are only 4 feet high. Buildings of this type, occasionally oblong, occur in proximity to many of the duns. At a dun, west of Dunvegan, there is a circular chamber 2½ yards in diameter; another, of an oval shape, is 4 yards long at its widest diameter, with a smaller chamber opening out of it. This chamber is not built on to the other, but is formed by the bulging out of the enclosing wall. The foundation of another hut is seen close by.

At this dun and also below Dun Beag, near Struan, are small circular or oval structures 3 to 4 feet in diameter, and, as they remain, no more than 4 feet in height. Their purpose is an enigma. The one at Struan stands within the walls of an oblong building.

In other cases, as at Dun Torvaig and Dun Ghearra-Sheader, near Portree, there are remains of structures built against the face of a rock. These doubtless served as dwellings, possibly after the duns had become tenantless.

All such buildings denote a primitive type of civilisation, and though in many cases they survived until comparatively recent times, their origin dates from the pre-Christian age, as has been proved in the case of Irish buildings of this type.[1]

4. *Earth-houses.*

An earth-house may be described as a long and narrow passage, running underneath the ground for

[1] "Primitive" is a word which is loosely used. The crofter's hut is almost as primitive looking as these beehive cells must have been, though it is larger, yet it is in actual use in the twentieth century.

some distance, occasionally expanding as it goes on, or opening into a chamber. In some cases passages lead off from the main passage into other chambers. The walls of the passage are made of blocks of stone uncemented (they are exactly like a perfectly formed dry-stone dyke), and over these are laid long slabs of flat stone. They usually occur in the face of a bank, and must have been formed by digging out the earth from the surface, and then piling it over the finished structure, or by a process of actual tunnelling. In some cases the passage is in the form of a curve.

As they occur in Skye, earth-houses are mostly of a simple type, being little more than an underground passage widening out occasionally into a terminal chamber. As they are found now, they are usually blocked up with débris, and only the entrance can be traced. This is usually found between two parallel banks of earth, which when covered with turf would completely hide it. The most elaborate house is found near the school at Vatten, in the parish of Duirinish. It is now choked up, but, as described in the *New Statistical Account*, it was an interesting example of such structures. The entrance is in a precipitous bank overhanging the burn. The passage, 3 feet high and 70 feet long, led into a central chamber, arched with overlapping stones, 5 feet high, while other narrow galleries branched off the main passage. Another on the farm of Claigan, near Dunvegan, has walls 3 feet high, covered with slabs of stone $3\frac{1}{2} \times 1\frac{1}{2} \times 1\frac{1}{2}$ feet, but after proceeding several yards the passage is blocked by earth. A third near Uilinish House is 3 feet in breadth and 4 feet high. About 6 yards from the entrance the roof of the passage has fallen in, and beyond this it is blocked. A fourth occurs at Colbost, Glendale, and is interesting as having at least two side chambers still intact; beyond them the gallery is choked up. Two others are found at Loch Duagraich, one at Uadairn under Ben

Tianavaig, one on the Beal cliff, near Portree. Others have been destroyed through the stones being taken for building purposes, as at Braes, where the existence of the earth-house was not known till a plough struck against the roof. It consisted of a long passage curving round to form nearly a semicircle. Another at Peinfiler, near Portree, has been destroyed within the last two years. When opened, peat ashes were found on the floor at the end of the passage.

The name of Druids' houses applied locally to these structures explains nothing. More useful is the tradition that they were used as places of retreat in time of invasion. This agrees with the opinion of competent antiquaries, with the statement of Tacitus that the Germans used subterranean places for this purpose and also as winter-houses and granaries, and with the fact that in Skye, as elsewhere, traces of surface dwellings are usually found in connection with the earth-houses.[1] There could have been little comfort in these subterranean galleries and chambers, and nothing exists to show how a fresh supply of air was provided. We know, however, that the Esquimaux live underground in winter, and "the clartier the cosier" was doubtless as comforting a belief in Scotland then as now. Were the builders Celts or an earlier race? Probably the former, as the structure of the passages is identical with that of the galleries in the brochs, unless they, too, were the work of an earlier people than the Celts. Indeed, all these various structures suggest a small people as their inhabitants, and the Celts proper could scarcely be described as small.

5. *Duns.*

The word "dun" originally meant in Gaelic a hillock or eminence, then it was applied to the fort which crowned the hillock, then to any fort no

[1] Notably at Vatten, and again at Uilinish, where there is the foundation of a beehive hut.

matter where situated.[1] There are over fifty duns in Skye, but in nearly every case they are so dismantled and ruinous that it is well-nigh impossible to tell what their original structure was. As far as my examination of their unsatisfactory condition goes, I seem to trace three types: (1) duns which may have been brochs, properly so called; (2) duns of a "semi-broch" type; (3) duns which are evidently little more than ordinary hill forts.

Brochs are found over a wide Celtic area, and in structure consist of a solid dry-stone wall, circular in form, averaging 13 feet in thickness. At the height of 10 feet the wall is divided into an outer and inner wall, enclosing a series of galleries formed by traversing the walls horizontally by tiers of flagstones, which thus form the roof of one gallery and the floor of the one above. A narrow entrance in the thickness of the wall, guarded by a door or doors, gives access to the central court. At one side of this entrance there is a "guard-chamber," *i.e.* a beehive cell in the thickness of the wall, while usually two or more

[1] I append a list, following the districts:

Trotternish, East side, Duns Vannarain, Mhor, Vallerain, Greanan, Raisaburg, Connabern, Greanan, Borve, Ghearra-Sheader, Torvaig.

Trotternish, West side, Duns Liath, Skudiburg, ? (near Peinduin), Eyre.

Braes, Dun an Aird.

Lyndale, Duns na h'Airdhe, Borve, Flashader, Suledale ? (near Edinbane).

Vaternish, Duns Cearymore, Borrafiach, Hallin.

Duirinish, Dun ? (north of Dunvegan), Duns Borreraig, Colbost, Osdale, ? (near Orbost), Feorlig, Elireach, Neill.

Bracadale and *Minginish*, Duns Arkaig, Mhor, Beag, Diarmaid, Taimh, Merkadale, ? (near Loch Eynort), two others near Fiskavaig.

Strath, Duns Borreraig, Liath, Ringill, Mhor, Beag, Grugaig, Kearstach.

Sleat, Duns Bhan, a Cheleirich, Chlo, Faich, Bhan, Ruaige.

These will all be found on the Survey maps.

Dun Dugan, near Portree, in Christison's list, is only a hill. His Duns Garsin, Geilbt, and Hasan, I have not been able to identify; they may represent some of the nameless duns in my list.

such cells are entered from the inner court, one of them giving access to the galleries above by a staircase.

(1) As far as I can judge, certain duns in Skye may have been brochs. The best example of this type is Dun Beag, near Struan. Part of the wall on the outside is 13 feet high, and this wall, 9 feet thick, is solid. Traces of the entrance remain on the south face of the dun. To the right of this entrance is the "guard chamber," clearly of the beehive type, and apparently opening to the interior. All trace of the upper galleries has long disappeared. The interior court shows the foundation walls of a central chamber, and of others surrounding it, but these may be the work of a later time. The diameter of the court is 36 feet.[1]

(2) A dun of the "semi-broch" type stands on a peninsula two miles north-west of Dunvegan Castle. The wall, which is very ruinous, is 10 feet thick, but it contains, close to the ground, part of an interior gallery which can be followed for about 6 yards. It is nearly 3 feet broad, and is covered with rough-hewn slabs of stone resting on the inner and outer walls. What may have been a beehive cell or "guard-chamber" at the entrance, is found in another part of the structure. Another fort of this type is Dun Greanan, which is interesting as standing on a tiny peninsula in Loch Mealt, near Staffin, approached by a narrow neck of land. The foundations of the inner and outer walls alone remain.

(3) The simple hill fort consists of an outer wall or walls, covering sometimes a considerable area. Dun Torvaig, near Portree, suggests this type of dun. It consists of a wall, roughly oval, 84 × 45 feet, crowning a rocky knoll. Across their narrowest diameter the walls are connected by two parallel walls, forming a kind of inner fort, 45 × 21 feet in size. The entrance is 2 feet wide.

[1] In Pennant's time the walls were 18 feet high, and the entrance was in excellent preservation. Dun Mhor, near by, is traditionally said to have been unfinished by its builders.

DUN BEAG, STRUAN

As a rule, all these duns occupy only part of the hilltop, either the centre, or more usually one side, and that the most precipitous. An outer wall encloses the central structure and guards the summit. They command an extensive view, and generally speaking are within sight of each other, so that the approach of an enemy could be quickly made known over a wide district by signalling. This, as ancient poems describe, was done by kindling a fire on the top of the wall. It is noticeable that the duns are built mainly along the seacoast, or in the fertile valleys, where, of course, the population would be thickest. If the builders were not an earlier race, then they were Celts, and the Celts built them as places of refuge and defence against the Norse invaders. The duns, though often ascribed to the "Danes" or Northmen, are never found in Scandinavia, and are confined to Celtic districts. That many of them bear Norse names is no argument against their Celtic origin, as doubtless the Norsemen used them after conquering the country, and probably translated the earlier Gaelic name into Norse.[1]

Round the duns a few fairy stories have clustered; one of them, Dun Scaith, figures in the Ossianic saga, as we shall see, and in the heroic tales of Cuchullainn. But, like the magnificent subterranean castle of the Elf-king in *Childe Rowland*, glittering with gold and silver and jewels, itself but a transmuted earth-house, the dun has become a marvellous structure, with "seven great doors and seven great windows between every two doors of them, and thrice fifty couches between every two windows of them, and thrice fifty handsome marriageable girls in scarlet cloaks and in beautiful and blue attire." It was built on a rock "of appalling height," and approached by a bridge like the weird "brig of dreid, na braider

[1] The Skye duns have never been dealt with in detail. For brochs generally, see Dr. Joseph Anderson, *Scotland in Pagan Times*; and for hill forts, Dr. David Christison, *Ancient Fortifications of Scotland*, who gives a list of thirty-six Skye duns.

than a threid," and from its magic casement Cuchullainn saw the beautiful face of Uathach, the daughter of the princess of the dun, and straightway fell in love with her. So folk-tale and saga everywhere have adorned the prosaic facts of life and made them exceeding magnifical. Where life is simple man inevitably thinks in poetry.

6. *Castles.*

A date posterior to the departure of the Norsemen must be assigned to the ruined fortalices of Skye perched on rocks round the coast, and in some cases, if not in all, occupying the site of an earlier dun. They are of one type, with stony central keep and flanking outworks, pointing to an early mediæval origin. They were the strongholds of the chiefs of Skye, guarding different parts of their lands, but liable, with the varying fortunes of clan fights, to pass with part of these lands from one to another, only to be recaptured with more inevitable bloodshed. Of these ruined strongholds, omitting Duntulm and Dunvegan (which is inhabited), already described, there are traces more or less complete of five of these castles. They are Caisteall Uisdean on the shore of Loch Snizort, south of Uig; the foundation stones of a nameless castle on one of the islands of Dunvegan Loch; Dunakyne or Castle Maoil, near Kyleakin; Dunskaith on the southern shore of Loch Slapin, near Ord; Knock Castle on the Sound of Sleat, sometimes called Castle Camus.

Like all Hebridean castles, they stand on some commanding height by the sea, which formed at once a protection and a means of retreat, when necessary, in the galleys moored beneath the walls. The keep and outworks were surrounded by a strong wall, and all perched on a rock made inaccessible if it were not naturally so, and surrounded by a ditch. There, except driven to desperation by hunger, a chief could bid defiance to his enemies. The few traditions which have been handed down give us some idea of

the wild and dark deeds which their mouldering walls have seen through the dim centuries, of the sieges and attacks, sallies and onslaughts, which went on around them. In peaceful hours they could never have been comfortable dwellings; but a lavish if rude hospitality was the rule, bagpipe and harp, song and dance resounded within them; and brave men and fair women lived out their lives there, and cherished the same hopes and resolves and met with the same disappointments as we. In the romantic Isle of Skye, these grey ruins quicken the thoughts of the imaginative, and fancy reconstructs them, and sees them in all the glory of their past history.

Of Castle Maoil, whose ruined keep is so prominent an object in the beautiful channel at Kyleakin, and whose walls are 11 feet thick, tradition says that a Norse king's daughter, married to a Macdonald and still remembered as "Saucy Mary," built it in order to prevent vessels from passing without paying toll. Whether she did this by having a chain stretched across the sound may be doubted, but it is not improbable that such a tax would be levied by the owner of the castle. It, with Dunringill, belonged to the Mackinnons of Strath. Dunskaith and Castle Camus belonged to the Macdonalds, and of the first many romantic stories are told.

Little now remains of Dunskaith, but once it was an extensive building. Its surroundings are grand and inspiring. Loch Slapin winds past its walls, and beyond its waters the long range of the Coolins, Blaaven, and the Red Hills, seem to mount to a giddy height from the sea, splintered and jagged and gashed with ravines and torrent-beds. Behind, the ground rolls upwards into rounded hills, covered with birch-wood. In this romantic spot, Dunskaith, or an earlier building, was raised by Cuchullainn and his heroes, like Aladdin's palace, in a single night.

"All night the witch sang, and the castle grew
Up from the rock, with tower and turrets crowned;
All night she sang—when fell the morning dew,
'Twas finished round and round."

It stands on an isolated rock separated from the land by a deep ravine once crossed by a drawbridge, and the existing ruins show traces of the ancient dungeon and draw-well. Here Cuchullainn left his fair wife, Bragela, to pine in his absence, and to gaze with eager eyes from its ramparts for the white sail that never came over the sea to Skye.

> "He cometh not, she said;
> She said, I am a-weary, a-weary,
> I would that I were dead."

In 1449, when the lands of Skye passed formally into the hands of the Macdonalds, Dunskaith became the property of Hugh of Sleat, son of John, Lord of the Isles. Years after, when it had passed into the hands of his collateral descendant, Donald Gruamach or the grim (after a series of rapid changes of owners, sieges, and treacherous murders), his cousin Ranald came on a visit to Dunskaith from North Uist. The Gruamach's wife was a Clanranald, and was entertaining twelve of her clansmen on Ranald's arrival. Perhaps he had a private feud with Clanranald, perhaps he was of a morbidly touchy nature, but disgust seized his soul, and early one morning he slew the twelve and hung them up on a wall opposite the lady's window. Then he sought his cousin and told him he must go. Donald pressed him to stay until his wife could bid him farewell. "No, I must go; for she will not thank me for my morning's work when she looks out of her bedroom window." Nor did she; and some time after, Ranald was assassinated by her steward, and at her order.

The other fortress in Sleat, Castle Camus, which a seventeenth-century writer speaks of as standing "upon the east or south-east over-against Knoydart," may be identified with the ivy-covered ruins at Knock, perched on a crag above the sandy inlet, commanding a magnificent view of the Sound of Sleat and the mountains of the mainland. It

belonged to the barons of Sleat, and between 1488 and 1513 is traditionally said to have been besieged by the MacLeods. A brave defence was offered by a heroine known as Mary of the Castle, who, like another Joan of Arc, inspired her people to hold out against and defeat the rival clan. At a later date, in 1617, the famous Donald Gorme was bound by the terms on which he held his lands from the Crown, to have Castle Camus always ready to receive the king or his lieutenants.

Nearly half-way between Kingsburgh and Uig, on a rock near the sea, are the ruins of Castle Uisdean or Hugh's Castle, of which a romantic story is told. Hugh was a relative and next-of-kin of Donald Gorme, and by all accounts was only too ready to hasten his death by fair means or foul. He was a man who had reason to fear vengeance from more than one, if the story of the building of Castle Uisdean be true. The tower contained no windows; the only entrance was a little door high up in the wall, reached by a ladder which the wary Hugh pulled up after him, and then bade defiance to the world until his supplies ran short. After entering into a second plot against Donald, Hugh expressed penitence in a letter, but unfortunately sent it by mistake to a fellow-conspirator, while his intended victim received another describing the arrangements for his own murder. Unaware of this, Hugh accepted an invitation to Duntulm, where Donald Gorme rid himself of this relentless enemy in the horrible manner already described.

7. *Churches.*

In Dean Monro's time there were twelve parishes and parish churches, now there are nine, and in no case is the ancient church used. These have either disappeared altogether, or stand, a mouldering ruin, near the barn-like structure, which the heritors in Scotland so often built because it was cheaper to do so than to restore the beautiful earlier building. At

Duirinish, and in the romantic valley of Strath alone, the remains of the old parochial churches show what they formerly were. Both are remarkably alike. Walls and pointed gables, lancet windows, and a remarkable lack of carved stones sufficiently characterise them. Within the walls the dead are buried, while attached to each is a modern family vault with pillared balustrade, in Duirinish the burial-place of the MacLeods, at Strath of the Mackinnons. The site of both is beautiful. Duirinish church, dedicated to the Virgin, stands on the edge of the moor near the head of the loch, in full view of MacLeod's Tables and a wide tract of country. A little burn courses down by the edge of the teeming churchyard. The scenery round the remote and quiet ruins of Kilchrist has been already described. In the churchyard at Duirinish stands a curious obelisk, on a square base. It is much decayed, and the inscribed marble slab has fallen out and is broken. But the inscription can still be read as Johnson and Boswell read it, with a sneer at him whom it commemorates. This was Thomas, Lord Lovat, father of the infamous Simon, by whose piety the monument was erected. Having married MacLeod's sister, he was on a visit to Dunvegan Castle, where he died in 1699. "And for the great love he bore to the family of MacLeod, he desired to be buried near his wife's relations, in the place where two of her uncles lay."

The old parish church of Kilconan at Trumpan is interesting as the scene of that grim tragedy when the Macdonalds fired it while the MacLeods were worshipping within. It stands on high ground overlooking the sea and the outer isles. The church, of which the north wall and the east gable are still intact, is built of cemented stone. In the north wall is the doorway with a rudely pointed arch, and in this wall, at the chancel end, and in the east gable, are windows—little more than narrow slits on the outside, but widening out to rather more than 3 feet within. The walls are 3 feet in thickness.

The font, or perhaps the holy water stoup, is made out of a block of basalt hollowed out roughly without any attempt at ornamentation or even symmetry. It lies on the ruined south wall, and is said to be always full of water no matter how often it is emptied. Experiment has proved this to be true, but as the stone is porous and full of moisture, the phenomenon is explained easily. In the interior of the building is a carved stone, with a sword and the usual Celtic interlaced tracery.

In Kilmuir the earlier parish church at Kilmoluag was dedicated to St. Moluac ; after the Reformation another church dedicated to the Virgin was used. Its graveyard still remains, but the church itself is replaced by the present parish church, built in 1810. Uig was formerly a separate parish, but is now united to Snizort. The church stood at Clachan, at the head of the bay. Its dedication is unknown. Snizort parish now also includes Lyndale, whose church, dedicated to St. Donnan, stood at the township still called Kildonnan.

The old parish church of Sleat, which has now entirely disappeared, was dedicated to the Virgin, and stood at Kilmore, where there is still the ruin of a seventeenth-century church.

These churches in most cases probably did not date beyond the fourteenth century. But there are many others, scattered throughout the island, of a much more ancient date. They are very small, usually not more than 22 feet long, consist only of one oblong chamber without chancel, and have one door and one window, the latter in the eastern gable above the altar. They are built of roughly hewn stone, sometimes cemented with lime, in a few cases not, and must have been erected at an early period of Celtic Christianity. Their structure is perfectly plain, and even with their internal ornaments, which could never have been very grand, they must always have been so. They could never have held a large congregation, but they are very

numerous, and may have each served as the church of a township in these far-off times, before the parishes were formed and parish churches erected. This is not unlikely, as will presently appear. They would be served by a few Columban monks, who lived in cells near by. Most of these tiny buildings have quite disappeared. Thus of thirty in the three parishes of Kilmuir, Portree, and Snizort, about one hundred and twenty years ago, traces of only six can now be found. Of others only the foundations remain, as in the case of St. Columba's Island in Portree Bay, and at the old burying-ground on the meadow between the lofty cliffs on the north side of the same bay. At Skeabost, on an island in the river just where it joins the loch, and accessible only by stepping-stones, the remains are more complete. The walls and gables might easily be roofed over; the pointed window is not quite in the middle of the east gable. The whole length of the building is only 21 feet 4 inches. It has been built with lime, but the stones are rough and of all sizes. Now their interstices are crowded with wall-rue and spleenwort, which cover the walls with delicate green drapery. The island is still used as a place of burial, as it has been for untold generations, no doubt even in pre-Christian times, and the graves are marked by slabs of unlettered stone, which bear no tribute to the nameless dead. This chapel, like the other in Portree Loch, is dedicated to St. Columba, and perhaps both were erected in his time if not by himself.

Similar churches, showing often no more than the mere foundation stones, are found in various parts of the island. In other cases they have entirely disappeared, and only the local name perpetuates their memory. In nearly every locality the dedication was to some Celtic saint. In the parish of Kilmuir stood a church dedicated to St. Martin (either St. Martin of Tours, a popular saint in Scotland, or a Celtic saint of that name) at the township called Kilmartin, where the ancient burial-ground is still

used. At Kilvaxter, near the old monastery on St. Columba's Loch, stood another of these cells, under the rule of the nuns of Iona. Kildorais, near Flodigarry, and Kilbride, north of Uig, may mark the sites of chapels dedicated to these saints.

In the parish of Bracadale, where St. Assint was the patron saint, Maelrubha seems to have been equally popular. Formerly the annual tryst was at the end of August or the beginning of September, when St. Maelrubha's day occurs, and a chapel dedicated to him stood near the head of the lonely Loch Eynort. It was rebuilt after the Reformation, but has been ruinous since the end of the eighteenth century. Of the font belonging to this church I shall have something to say later. The parish church of St. Assint must have stood in the beautiful ravine at the head of Loch Beag, where the present modern building is. To it an old record says that the Bishop of Argyll presented Master John Mackinnon in 1632.

The parish of Strath must at an early date have been a strong ecclesiastical centre, and the district was the scene of St. Maelrubha's labours in the eighth century. A little church dedicated to him stood at Kilmarie, which, like Loch Maree in Ross-shire, might at first sight seem to denote the Virgin, but is in reality merely a corruption of the Celtic saint's name. Half-way between Broadford and Kyle is a burial-ground called Kil Ashig. At this place St. Maelrubha is known to have preached and hung his bell on a tree, from which it was subsequently taken to Kilchrist in Strath Suardal, a legend to which I have already referred. Here, too, stood a chapel dedicated to St. Ashig or Asaph, and his name is again found at Tobar Ashig, where there is a beautiful spring, and in the little loch of the same name, a mile south-east of the churchyard. The names of the two saints are joined together in the place-name of Askemourey. In the same parish there is Kilbride, west of Kilchrist, with the site of a chapel dedicated to St. Bride or Bridget—a popular Celtic saint;

while Teampuill Choan and Teampuill Frangaig, both in Borreraig, point to chapels dedicated to St. Congan or Coan and St. Francis.

Besides the chapels on St. Columba's Island and on the meadow near the Beal in Portree parish, there was still another a little to the north of the town at Kiltaraglan with a place of burial which was used until the present churchyard was formed over a hundred years ago. Chapel and burying-ground have both disappeared, and only a ploughed field bears the name of the saint. Who he was is open to question. The name may be a corruption of Talorgan, but Dr. Reeves conjectures that this old chapel may rather have been St. Maelrubha's, whose fair was held at Portree on the first Tuesday in September under the name of Samarive's fair.

What seems to demonstrate that these little churches were of an earlier date than the typical parish church, is the fact of the occasional existence of a larger ruined church close beside them. This occurs at Kirkapoll in Tiree, and notably on the island at Skeabost where the river joins Loch Snizort Beag. The island is the parish burying-ground, and this ruined building served as the parish church for many centuries, devotion to St. Columba who visited the island overcoming the difficulty (very slight after all) of reaching it. Little of the building now remains; just enough to show that it was 82 feet long, and of a chancelled type, which in itself proves it to be of later date than the smaller building near by.

On this island, as well as in the churchyard at Kilmuir, are some interesting carved stones, bearing deeply incised figures of armed knights. These closely resemble the Iona stones, and are usually believed to have been stolen from Iona by a piratical Skyeman. This is far from unlikely, as the primitive Celt had no illusions about property. But it is just as likely that the stones may be of local origin, as Celtic art, though confined to typical forms, was not

necessarily confined to one particular district. The stones are exposed to wind and weather, and the carving is being rapidly destroyed.

Among the ecclesiastical remains of Skye, not the least interesting are the ruins of the monastic establishment on the island in the drained moss which was formerly covered by the waters of Loch Columcille. They were ruins in the seventeenth century, when they were described as "a tower and a town and the remains of a chapel built with mortar." On the north side of the island is a roughly circular enclosure, 16 yards in its greatest diameter, and containing the foundations of three chambers or cells of varying size. These may have been of the beehive type. The wall of this enclosure is broken down, but what is left shows it to have been built of large blocks, roughly but securely placed together, and in places fully 9 feet thick. Traces of what may have been the entrance are found on its south side, and there may have been little cells in the thickness of the wall. Probably this is the "tower" referred to by the seventeenth-century writer.[1]

Immediately to the south of this building are two small quadrilateral buildings, one of which measures 30 × 10 feet, and has been divided in two across its breadth, while still farther to the south-west is the church or "temple," dedicated to St. Columba. Its walls are now only 8 feet high; its length is 21 feet 10 inches; its breadth 12 feet 2 inches. The stones have been cemented, and more pains have been taken with squaring and fitting them than in the case of the other buildings.

The whole ground surrounding the remains of these buildings is covered with the débris of the "town," *i.e.* the beehive cells, in each of which dwelt a monk, but not one of them remains entire.

[1] A rectangular enclosure, surrounded by a wall 4 feet high and 22 yards long and broad, stands to the north of the tower. It may be as old as the other buildings, but is probably of more recent date.

Traces of a wall which enclosed all the buildings and cells are seen here and there.

This group of ruins, lichen and moss covered, and rude in structure, has a most venerable appearance. St. Columba may have founded the establishment; at least, it must date from near his time, and there are few earlier ecclesiastical remains in Scotland. The whole group has the character of similar monasteries of early Celtic age in Ireland. These, with their church or churches, cells and oratories, and other buildings, were surrounded by an outer wall which served for a protection in a rough age.[1] Simplicity, even to rudeness, characterises all these structures, and connects them and this unique "cashel" in Skye with the first preaching of the Faith in Scotland by those brave missionaries for whom neither man nor nature had any terrors.

8. *General.*

Besides the urns discovered in burial cairns, many other articles of great interest have been found from time to time in Skye, dating from the Stone Age onwards. Most of these are now preserved in the museum of the Society of Antiquaries in Edinburgh, while notices of some of them occur in the *Proceedings* of that society.

Arrow-heads of flint have been met with from time to time; the writer found one in his own garden. But on the whole the relics date from a later age, and are largely of bronze. As is natural in a district where the people "could never get eneugh o' fechtin'," bronze swords have been repeatedly discovered. They are of one type—that which is met with commonly in other parts of Scotland—leaf-shaped, with a sharp point and a flat projection at the hilt with rivet holes, by means of which the handle was fastened on. They were probably used for thrusting rather than for striking, though the edges bear traces of sharpening. One of the swords

[1] See Lord Dunraven's *Notes on Irish Architecture.*

was found in 1851 along with two spear-heads and a pin, in the moss between the farms of Gillean and Ach-na-Cloich in Sleat. It is 22½ inches long and 1¾ inch broad at the broadest part of the blade. Another of similar type was found in the moss near Trumpan. It is 23¼ inches long and 1⅝ inch broad. It was discovered on the site of the battle fought between the Macdonalds and the MacLeods (p. 62), and if it is a relic of that fight, bronze swords must have continued in use long after the introduction of iron. Captain Macdonald of Vaternish has a third in his possession, found by a crofter while digging peats in the same locality. Others have been found at Lyndale (this one is 2 feet long), at Rigg, and elsewhere, and Pennant describes one in his *Tour*.

The bronze spear-heads found at Sleat along with the sword have blades of a leaf shape with long cylindrical sockets which are continued up the centre of the blade, tapering towards its point. Towards the end of the socket are rivet holes on either side for fixing the head to the shaft. The heads are 7¾ inches long and 1½ inch broad.

The bronze pin found along with these weapons is 10½ inches in length—too long for wear, says one antiquary, forgetting the fearful weapons with which women of a later age affix their bonnets to their heads. A cup-shaped head, ½ inch deep and ⅞ inch in diameter, is fixed to the upper part of the pin, and probably held an ornamental stone or piece of amber. Similar pins, with disc-shaped heads highly ornamented, have been found elsewhere in Britain and on the Continent.

Associated with these bronze articles in the Sleat find was a bent leaf-shaped instrument of bronze, socketed, 4 inches in length. Its use is unknown, but others like it have been found at Invergordon. Some fragments of oaken boards were found *in situ* with these instruments, and may have formed part of a box originally enclosing them.

A socketed bronze axe or celt of a common type

was found at Strath. It is wedge shaped, and the socket opening is more or less oval. The sides curve outward slightly towards the blade, which is $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches broad. On one side is a loop, used for fastening the weapon to the L-shaped shaft by a cord. There is a moulding round the socket, just above the loop, and the whole length of the weapon is $3\frac{5}{8}$ inches.

In a moss at Kyleakin, below $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches of peat, was discovered a bronze cauldron, of a type rare though not unknown in Scotland. Its diameter is 18 inches, its depth 12 inches; and it is made of one single sheet of metal beaten into the required shape. It is patched on the bottom, the patches being put on with clippings of bronze. The rim and handles are gone, but the holes for the rivets of the latter are still visible in the vessel.

Near this cauldron was a keg of "butter." The keg was barrel shaped, but hollowed out of a single piece of wood 14 × 13 inches. On either side were slight projections with holes bored in them apparently by a red-hot instrument. An analysis of the butter showed it to be of similar composition to that found elsewhere in Scotland. Another barrel was also discovered at Sleat.

In the Antiquarian Museum, Edinburgh, are three iron padlocks of oblong shape, with spring hook, dug out of a peat moss in Skye, locality unknown. There also is an ornamented stone ball, $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches in diameter, of a type frequently found in Scotland but nowhere else. This ball is peculiar in being covered with a series of rounded projections $\frac{1}{2}$ inch in height. It weighs $17\frac{3}{4}$ ounces, and is made of pale coloured claystone. Swung by thongs or attached to a handle and used as a mace, these balls must have proved formidable weapons in the chase or war. Still more interesting is the collection of coins forming a Viking hoard, and discovered by a keeper in a rabbit hole beside a boulder above Holm Island on the Trotternish coast. The boulder and island were intended as guide-posts for the owner, who,

probably killed in a sea-fight, never returned to claim them. The coins number several hundreds, and are of all ages, some of the more recent being Saxon, with the head and title of Ethelred II. (?) figured on them. Another hoard opened in 1850 contained six arm-rings of silver.

A once highly ornamented spur was found in the draining operations at Monkstadt. It is jewelled and chased, and has once been gilded. The shanks are 4 inches long and curved to fit the ankle; the neck terminates in a prick 1 inch long. The chasing is of interlaced ribbons, enclosing quatrefoils, and in each shank are three oval sockets for gems, which on one side are filled with stones. Only one of the sockets on the other shank contains a stone, of a blue colour. Another socket is placed on the neck. One shank is bent and shows three indentations, while the centre gem is cracked, suggesting blows made by a sword and the tearing of the spur from the foot in some long-forgotten fight.

Two canoes were also found at Monkstadt, the first in 1763, the second in 1874. The earlier one had disappeared at an early date, but was described to the writer of the *Statistical Account* by the son of a man who helped to dig it up. It was formed out of one piece of oak, and at either end were iron rings of great thickness, three at one end, two at the other. Local conjecture supposed it to be the ferry-boat employed by the monks in passing from the monastery to the shore. The other was discovered by some crofters while digging out a ditch near the loch. It was hollowed out of a single trunk, of pine or perhaps some foreign wood floated ashore. When found, the wood was quite spongy. The stem was well rounded; no signs of fire in hollowing the canoe were noticeable; and inside and outside were smoothed with great care. The depth of this canoe was little more than 6 inches. Both canoes seem to have resembled others of prehistoric date found in Scotland, though the iron rings of the first suggest later origin.

The last antiquarian relic from Skye which I shall mention is the ancient font from St. Maelrubha's chapel at Loch Eynort, now in the Antiquarian Museum. It is made of hornblendic gneiss, and is bowl shaped. Across the brim it measures 1½ foot, and is 1 foot in height. The exterior is sculptured in relief in six panels. The first panel, surrounded by an interlaced pattern, contains a crucifix, with the head inclined to the right and the legs crossed. The figures in the other panels are St. Michael slaying the dragon and planting a limb of the cross in its mouth; the Virgin and Child; a mitred bishop with crozier; while in the remaining two panels defaced inscriptions occur. The lower part of the font has four sloping panels with carved floral devices. A clustered pillar of four divisions on which the font stood, still remains in the ruined chapel. A curious story is told of the removal of the font. Some Roman Catholic fishermen from South Uist, having put into Loch Eynort under stress of weather, discovered the font, and deeming it too sacred for the Protestants of Skye, resolved to carry it to their priest. When they put out to sea with their spoil, the weather rapidly grew worse, and the boat was forced to put back. An angry discussion now arose as to whether they dared provoke the saint by removing his font. A minority suggested its replacement, but the others refused, and again put out to sea. Once more the storm descended; once more they returned, and now in terror restored the font to its pillar. The weather improved, and the voyage to Glasgow was safely made. The fishermen took heart and made for Loch Eynort on their return. With much misgiving they carried the coveted font on board, but this time Maelrubha was propitious and nothing happened. The font was duly presented to their priest, his successor gave it to Mr. Carmichael, whose Celtic enthusiasm and knowledge are unbounded, and he, in turn, presented it to the Society of Antiquaries.

OVER THE SEA TO SKYE
(The Red Hills)

CHAPTER XVIII

HISTORICAL AND LITERARY ASSOCIATIONS

"They are like a mist on the coming of night,
That is scattered away by a light breath of wind."
OLD GAELIC POEM.

THE muse of history has not been forgetful of the Isle of Skye, and lifts the curtain of the past in successive ages to show a series of vivid tableaux in which great names have found a part. The history of Skye is merged in the general history of the Highlands. Racial wars, clan battles fought on the windy moors, opposition to the Scottish kings, fill up the tale of the centuries, followed by more peaceful ages, though not less romantic, out of which the Highlands, as we now know them, gradually emerge.

But at certain turning-points in history, Skye comes out of the general vagueness of the past, and stands clearly before our eyes, to fall back again into the dimness once more. Each new appearance marks, more or less definitely, an epoch in history, and it is to these successive appearances that this chapter will be devoted. Histories of the Highlands there are in abundance, but from the study of them the reader rises with a confused idea of warring chiefs, bearing similar names from generation to generation, and clan hordes mingling in confused and confusing mêlée, like the phantoms of some dim phantasmagoria. It will be enough for our purpose to depict the occasions when the Isle of Skye emerges clearly out of the dark backward and

abysm of time. Each appearance, as has just been said, marks a historic epoch. The Christianising of Celtic heathendom is suggested by St. Columba's missionary efforts in the island; the Scandinavian conquest by the connection of Haco with Skye; the long battle between feudal chiefs and Scottish kings by King James's visit; the dynastic struggles, in which the Highlands were so largely interested, by the wanderings of Prince Charles Edward through the island; the dawn of a more peaceful age and the opening up of the Highlands, by the visits of Dr. Johnson and, forty years later, Sir Walter Scott. And in the dim ages before Columba many mythic heroes of the Celts played their part in the Isle of Skye, where their names are yet remembered. Of these I shall speak first.

I.

Whether Cuchullainn was a culture-hero and divinity of the pagan Celts, whose mythical story became in later days a saga, or whether a real personage called Cuchullainn did exist, whose fame, as years went on, attracted to itself the myths of an earlier divine being of the same name, it is now quite impossible to say. But whoever he was, the Cuchullainn of the Ossianic poems is brought into close relationship with Skye. He was the chief of the Isle of Mist, and his seat was Dunskaith, near Ord in Sleat. To a stone near by the ruins of the castle he is said to have tied up his dog Luath when he returned from the chase. Cuchullainn went to the Irish wars, leaving his fair wife Bragela, "the lonely sunbeam of Dunskaith," behind him. Long she mourned him, but he never returned. Long she looked across the waves for the first glimpse of his sail.

Ossian describes her watching and Cuchullainn's death. "Dost thou raise thy fair face from the rock to find the sails of Cuchullainn? The sea is rolling

far distant, and its white foam shall deceive thee for my sails. Retire, for it is night, my love, and the dark wind sighs in thy hair. Retire to the halls of my feasts, and think of the times that are past, for I will return not till the storm of war is past."[1]

"Spread now thy white sails for the Isle of Mist, and see Bragela leaning on her rock. Her tender eye is in tears, and the winds lift her long hair from her heaving breast. She listens to the winds of night to hear the voice of thy rowers; to hear the song of the sea, and the sound of thy distant harp. And long shall she listen in vain: Cuchullainn will never return."[2]

"Hills of the Isle of Mist! when will ye listen to his hounds? But ye are dark in your clouds, and sad Bragela calls in vain. Night comes rolling down; the face of ocean fails. The heathcock's head is beneath his wing; the hind sleeps with the hart of the desert. They shall rise with morning's light, and feed on the mossy stream. But my tears return with the sun; my sighs come on with the night."[3]

Poetry and pathos brood round lonely Dunskaith, though the dim centuries separate us from brave Cuchullainn and lovely Bragela. And how often since then have passionate lovers in Skye known the bitterness of fruitless love and endless separation!

Another Ossianic hero, Fingal, is made to visit Skye. Ossian depicts a great deer drive organised by him, which took place in Strath, and at which six thousand deer were slain. The numbers need not be exaggerated; at a much later time, when Skye still swarmed with deer, it was possible to get a thousand head. The northern shoulder of Beinn-na-Greine, above Portree, is called Suidh Fhinn, or Fingal's Seat, where, according to tradition, the hero used to sit directing the chase in the valley below. He and his followers regaled themselves on the venison, cooked in a huge cauldron which was set

[1] *Fingal*, bk. i.
[2] *Ibid.* bk. vi.
[3] *Death of Cuchullainn.*

on three stones on the shore of Loch Snizort at Kensalyre. Two of these stones still remain to prove the truth of the story. These were the heroic ages of the Celt, when men lived on an opulent scale and held communion with the earlier gods.[1]

II.

A more definitely historical figure is that of St. Columba, with whose coming the paganism of the Celtic regions of the Hebrides and northern Highlands was doomed. That paganism consisted of a worship of the powers of nature, of life and growth. These powers, more or less personified, had each his separate department of life and of the world to govern. Some were gods of the nation, others of the tribe, and there were spirits of every place—hill and grove and stream. They were propitiated by sacrifices, often of human victims, and there are dim traces of orgiastic rites. In return, they gave life and increase to their worshippers, their fields and flocks. Magic rites mingled with religious worship, but both were under the control of a priesthood, the famous Druids, but little removed from the medicine-men of savage races.

All this St. Columba and his monks had to combat with, and it is certain that, though down to this day

[1] I have already referred in a note (p. 45) to the local application of the Irish Feinne legends in the Highlands. I add some other instances. When Feinne was in Skye, the chase was lost. Caoilte, who was swiftest, was sent to look for the deer while Feinne and his men gathered limpets on Loch Snizort. Caoilte found deer at Lynecan, an unknown locality, and gave a shout, which the heroes heard. One of them squirted some limpets and the grey-cheeked cow's milk on a rock still called Creagan a' Bhalguinn, the Rock of the Mouthful. It is discoloured to this day. The bed of this cow is a Creag nam Meann, the Kid Rock, behind Kingsburgh. Hiniosdail was one of her grazing places. Others were Eisgeadal, Toisgeadal, Carn a' Choin, Braigh Bhran, Uisgeseader, Suilseader, Bheann Mhoraig, Achachoirc, and Malagan. Some of these places are on the maps; all are north of Portree.

the Celtic mind is full of the ideas of that earlier paganism, and that its rites are still practised in a more or less altered form, the mission of the beloved Columba of the churches was wonderfully successful. From Iona, where he arrived in 565 A.D., he wandered over the wild regions beyond the seas. How the tiny coracles of framework and skins withstood the seething waters, it is hard even to guess. But the faith of these early missionaries was a robust one, and wherever they went they planted cells and churches and primitive monastic establishments, and gained the hearts of those barbarous chiefs and their people, who heard with wonder of the true Druid, the Christ.[1] And thus, as years went by,

> "They heard, across the howling seas,
> Chime convent bells on wintry nights;
> They saw, on spray-swept Hebrides,
> Twinkle the monastery lights."

Among his wanderings the saint came to the Isle of Skye. Adamnan, his biographer, tells how he prophesied that, when in Skye, an aged chief would come, seeking baptism. This chief, it is pleasing to know, had kept all the precepts of the natural law. Soon after the prophecy was uttered, a boat was seen approaching the shore of the loch, with an old man sitting in the prow. He was known to be Artbrannan, chief of a neighbouring tribe, or, as Adamnan says, of the "Geona cohort." Two of his companions brought him to the saint, who instructed him in the faith of the gospel. Then the chief sought baptism, which the saint administered to him. Almost immediately he died, and was buried just where he had landed, under a cairn of stones. Adamnan gives no note of the scene of this incident which can now let us identify it, but it is traditionally said to have been the shore of Loch Snizort. On the moor to the right of the highway as the river

[1] "Christ is my Druid," says St. Columba, in a poem attributed to him.

Snizort is approached, is a boulder on which the saint is believed to have stood and preached to the people. His balancing powers must have been as great as his powers of persuasion, unless the stone has altered considerably since then.

St. Columba was a favourite in Skye, to judge by the number of dedications to his memory, mostly, however, in the northern half of the island. First, in the upper half of Portree Bay, which was formerly called Loch Columcille, is a tiny island which bears the saint's name, and on which the foundations of a small church, perhaps erected by Columba himself, may still be traced. The next place where we find a dedication is in the island at the head of Loch Snizort; while a third is found at St. Columba's Loch, now drained, near Monkstadt.[1] Others probably exist; there are two, on Troda Island and Fladdahuan respectively.

Skye was a wooded island in St. Columba's time, for he miraculously destroyed a wild boar *in a dense forest*, and we learn from Adamnan that the ordinary hunter slew the boars with spears whose shafts "still kept the untrimmed bark." The saint had gone to pray alone in the wood, when the boar attacked him. He looked at it intently, and invoked God to help him, saying to the boar, "Thou shalt proceed no farther in this direction; perish in the spot which thou hast now reached." And the animal, it is said, immediately fell dead.

Of the exact itinerary of the saint's wanderings in Skye, or of the number of visits he paid, we know nothing. But the influence of this wonderful man, of the gentle nature and the strong persuasive will, must have affected the Skyemen of that day deeply. He and his monks were true Celts. Their holy rites replaced those of the Druids. Their chants made the magic runes die away. They held out a true hope to those whose light, in religious matters, had been so largely darkness. And in Skye, as in all

[1] See Chap. XVII.

the Western Isles, the echoes of their holy liturgies sounded in many a green glen, and mingled with the noise of dashing waves and the long wash of Hebridean seas.

It was well. The Celtic islanders needed all the faith and comfort they could obtain to uphold them in the coming years, when the long snake-like galleys of the Norsemen were to come gliding over the sea, carrying fire and slaughter, rapine and havoc, into the glens and valleys of the Isle of Mist. To that era our attention must now be turned.

III.

Before the year 794 A.D., as the *Annals of Ulster* tells us, "the islands of Britain were ravaged by the Gentiles." The Gentiles were Danes and Norsemen, or, as the Celts called them, Lochlanaich, and the King of Lochlann is a frequent character in Celtic folk-tales. For the next century the Western Isles, the Sudereys of the Norsemen, were the scene of raids and fights, burnings, ravagings, and killings. The Norsemen were born adventurers, filled with the lust of fighting and plunder, and doubtless they found in the Celts worthy opponents, and in the monasteries abundance of rich and costly things. They gave the Islesmen no rest:—

> "When watch-fires burst across the main
> From Rona, and Uist, and Skye,
> To tell that the ships of the Dane
> And the red-haired slayer were nigh;
> Our Islesmen rose from their slumbers,
> And buckled on their arms,
> But few, alas, were their numbers
> To Lochlann's mailèd swarms;
> And the blade of the bloody Norse
> Has filled the shores of the Gael
> With many a floating corse,
> And many a widow's wail."

The permanent occupation of the Isles did not take place till the end of the ninth century, and the

immediate occasion of it was a political revolution in Norway. Harold Haarfager, or the Fairhaired, say the sagas, made himself master of the whole of Norway in 875, driven thereto by the ambition of the maiden Gyda, who refused to become his wife save on these terms. The independent princelets or jarls resented his ambition, and fled to the Western Isles, from which they sallied forth and harassed Harold and his sworn men and territories. A man of Harold's untamed disposition would not sit still under these provocations, and, collecting a fleet, he set sail for the Hebrides. Rebellious Norsemen and native Celts alike were reduced to submission, and the Isle of Man, the Hebrides, and the Orkneys became for three long centuries Norse dominions. Not that the occupation was an easy one. The Celts gave continual trouble, and the Northmen were at perpetual feud among themselves; but, on the whole, the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries were centuries of Norse domination in the Hebrides.

The bays and winding sea-lochs of Skye and the other isles formed natural harbours for the galleys of the conquerors, and from them they set sail on many a distant conquering expedition, returning to their green shores with rich plunder. On the shores of the lochs lay their settlements, and some have seen in the many duns of the Hebrides Norse strongholds. But if these were used by the Norsemen, it could only have been after they had been captured from their Celtic builders. They must have intermarried with the Celts to some extent, but the persistence of the autochthonous type has, save in a few marked instances, suppressed the traces of Norse descent. Nor has the Celtic tongue been affected by the Norse occupation. Norse place-names there are in plenty, bosts and shaders and vaigs, Holm and Stein and Hamara, but it is always possible that these may be mere Scandinavian equivalents of earlier Celtic place-names. Some influence has been seen in an altered system of land

tenures and rents, but, on the whole, the occupation was too short, the union of conquered and conquerors too vague, to produce any lasting impression.

Into the succession of Norse princes, their wars, and their ups and downs, it is not our purpose to enter. The appearance of a strong Celtic element and the expulsion of the Norsemen must, however, be noticed. Gillebride, the Celtic lord of Argyll, had a son called Somerled, whose ambitious plans and growing strength caused much uneasiness to Olave the Red, King of Man and the Isles. This "devout and voluptuous prince," as he is quaintly called in an old chronicle, gave his daughter Ragnhildis to Somerled in marriage in 1140. This might have cemented friendship between the Norse kingdom and the overlord of Argyll, but it did not. Somerled soon fell to fighting with Olave's son and successor, Godred, whose Celtic subjects helped Somerled in his schemes. In a sea-fight, grim and great, in 1156, Godred's force was defeated off Isla, and after a second defeat in 1158, he had to cede his territories to Somerled, whom these victories made master of the Hebrides and Man. He thus became in effect the first Lord or King of the Isles, a title which his descendants still hold. In Somerled the Norsemen had found their master, and their power began to totter to its final fall. He emerges from that dim period as a mighty hero, strong and fearless, filled with ambitions which he carried out, for he had brains and could use them, as well as thews and sinews. In him we see the saviour of the Celts from foreign domination, and his traditional scheme of making himself master of broad Scotland, mythical though it may be, shows what the Celts believed of him, and animated his later descendants in their hostility to the Scottish kings.

After Somerled's death in 1164, his sons could not hold their own, and the Norsemen were once more in the ascendant. But now the struggle for Celtic or Scandinavian domination continued to run its course,

and soon the Scottish kings began to take note of their Norse rivals, for they, naturally, claimed to be overlords of the Western Isles. One incident shows the fury of the Celtic and Scandinavian struggle. Ferchar MacIntaggart, first Earl of Ross, a friend of Alexander II., made a descent on the Norsemen in Skye, where, says the saga, "they burned villages and churches (the Norsemen were by this time Christians), and they killed great numbers of men and women. The Scots even took the small children, and, raising them on the points of their spears, shook them till they fell down to their hands, when they threw them away lifeless." It was a cruel time, and Celt and Norseman vied with each other in savagery.

The Hebridean lords appealed for assistance to Haco, already annoyed by the negotiations of Alexander III. for the purchase of the sovereignty of the Isles from him. In July 1263, having collected a mighty fleet and armament, he set sail to punish the Celtic princes and to ravage the dominions of the Scottish king. He arrived first at Lewis, where new galleys joined his fleet. And now these galleys, a hundred strong, manned by sturdy rowers and mighty warriors, and led by Haco's own ship, built of oak overlaid with gold, with the Norse dragon at the prow, swept in glittering array down the Sound of Raasay, past Portree Bay, where the people watched in awe the mighty fleet sail past the warder cliffs of their bay. The brown sails were furled, and anchorage was made at Kyleakin (Haco's Kyle or Strait) by the Cailleach Stone, where new reinforcements met Haco. The Norse dominion seemed about to be re-established in the islands; rebellious subjects were punished; Argyll and Lennox knew the Norseman's blade and brand, and were laid waste with fire and slaughter. But Alexander III. had also been mustering his forces, and the great if doubtful battle of Largs was fought on a September day. Haco, if not defeated, was checked, and he and his men took refuge in their galleys. But the end of the Norse

plague, like that of the Armada, was due to the elements. A fierce tempest drove the galleys from the coast; such as were not broken on the shore fled before the blast, to be wrecked, many of them, on Lorne and Mull and Skye. Haco and his remaining force made for Wester Fjord in Skye, in other words, Loch Bracadale, "where he levied food of the islesmen." Then they set sail, broken and dispirited, for home.

> "And thine oaken galley, Haco,
> That sailed with kingly pride,
> Came shorn and shattered, Haco,
> Through the foaming Pentland tide."

Poor Haco, old and broken-hearted, landed at Kirkwall to die, and with his death the days of the triumphant Norse domination in the Isles were over.

IV.

If the Scottish kings had rid themselves of the Norsemen, they found they could not hold their overlordship of the Isles in absolutely undisputed sway. Technically, the Lords of the Isles and the Celtic chiefs held their lands from the kings of Scotland as feudal superiors. They seldom acknowledged their vassalage, or, when they did, resolved also to give as much trouble as possible. For the next two hundred years internal feuds among the islesmen and rebellion against the Scottish throne fill the chronicles of the Highlands. Skye, which became gradually the chief seat of the Lords of the Isles, saw the fiery cross sent round to summon Macdonalds and MacLeods to war with the Scots, as often as to bloody feuds with each other. We have seen what Somerled's ambitions were. He founded a kingdom which was purely Celtic, as against Norsemen and Scots, and it became a tradition with his descendants, when there were no more Norsemen to subdue, to afflict the Scots, or Southrons, as much as possible,

and to preserve an anti-Scottish, Celtic kingdom. "We have been auld enemies to the realm of Scotland," said the Lord of the Isles to Henry VIII., in 1545, when seeking an alliance with that enemy of the Scots for purposes of his own. The Scottish crown had always difficulty in reducing this Celtic kingdom. Scotland was a poor country; it had no standing army; and the Highland mountains barred the way to the Scots, as they had done to the Romans long before. The Celts, like the Boers, knew their wild country, and could make themselves invisible at will, or at the worst could retire to some "stark strength biggit on a craig" as often as need be.

In the wars of Bruce and the Scots with England for national independence, the Celtic influence was, for once, against England, but soon after he had to organise an expedition against the islesmen, when, having "dawntyt the Ilis," he tried to pacify their people with popular measures. But he never quite trusted them, and left as a legacy to his successors the advice never to let the Lordship of the Isles get into the hand of one man. Under succeeding kings the Lords of the Isles continued their policy of harassing their dominions, and carrying fire and slaughter far and wide. One of the fiercest incidents of the struggle was the battle of Harlaw, which arose out of the claim of Albany, regent of Scotland, to dispose of the earldom of Ross when it should have passed to Donald of the Isles. Every glen, strath, and island was soon aflame, and with an immense army Donald landed at Strome Ferry and swept across the mainland. At Harlaw the Earl of Mar met them. Donald of the Isles, with Macdonalds and MacLeods from Skye and Lewis and Harris, formed the main body on that dreadful day, which left few Lowland families out of mourning, though the battle decided the struggle but little.

So for years it went on. Raids and forays; an occasional pitched battle when the kings penetrated

to the Highlands; enforced or pretended submissions followed by renewed revolt, made up the story of these bygone years. But time and the superior qualities of the Scottish forces were bound to work their way. The Celtic armies were too loosely combined ever to remain a compact force after either a defeat or a victory. Moreover, the chiefs of clans were not always inclined to be loyal to the Lord of the Isles. In such directions lay signs of weakness. These causes, for example, led the proud Alasdair of the Isles, clad only in shirt and drawers, to appear suddenly before King James I. at Holyrood, to do penance. But this humiliation, of course, only led the clan to new activities. Meanwhile, the increasing consolidation of the Scottish kingdom, and the growing power of the Earls of Argyll and Atholl as rivals of the Lords of the Isles, led to their doom. The heroic age of the House of Somerled passed away in 1493 with the forfeiture of its chief, his title and lands. This forfeiture resulted in new attempts of the crown to force the clans to acknowledge its claim, and in struggles between rival scions of the family of the Isles to gain the honours of the ancient house.

James IV. and James V. were the hammers of the Celtic chiefs and their clans, and under them we see their final defeat and subjection to the Scottish crown. Both made repeated journeys into the Highlands, and in the last of these, when the submission of the chiefs was most complete, the Isle of Skye comes into prominence once more. James V. resolved to make such a pageant and progress through the Isles as would impress the chiefs with the might of the crown and the forces which it could summon in its defence. Twelve magnificent ships were got ready, all armed with artillery. Six of them were appropriated to the king, his retinue, and his army; Cardinal Beaton, the Earl of Huntly, and the Earl of Arran, had each one; and the remaining three carried provisions, baggage, and

pavilions. In May this large and splendidly equipped armament set sail from the Firth of Forth, and going northwards, touched at the Orkneys and Caithness, and doubled Cape Wrath. The Hebrides were next visited, and at various places courts of justice were held and punishments meted out. Magnificent sport occupied the attention of the king and his courtiers, and doubtless the glory of the Western Isles in that early summer time was not lost upon some of them. Having visited the outer isles, the fleet entered Loch Dunvegan, where the castle yielded to superior force, and Alexander, chief of the clan, and some others, were made prisoners. From Dunvegan the ships sailed round to Score Bay, where they dropped anchor. Here the king visited Duntulm Castle, and was impressed with its magnificent situation and strong fortifications. It had lately been occupied by the MacLeods till they were driven from it by Donald Gorme, Lord of the Isles *de facto* though not *de jure*, who was shortly after killed before Ellandonan. At this time the chief of the clan, his son, was only a child.

The fleet then sailed down Raasay Sound, as Haco's galleys had done three hundred years before, under the shadow of Storr and the basaltic cliffs of the east coast of Skye. Sweeping round the Beal, they entered Portree Bay and dropped anchor there. The army landed on the rocky shore by the present Scorrybreck House, which shore was afterwards known as Creag-na-mor-Shluagh, the rock of the great multitude, while the king with his court landed at the burn a little to the east. It was hence called Port-an-Righ, and this name the bay and village have since retained instead of the earlier name of Loch Columcille. There was then no town where Portree now stands; the hillsides were covered with wood, which has long since disappeared; but the main features of the landscape are otherwise unchanged. James saw the Coolins

and the ridge of Storr, Ben Tianavaig and Fingal's Seat, as we see them to-day. Imagination, as we stand on the "Lump," can depict for us the fleet at anchor in the blue bay, decked with bunting, and on the flat ground where the square now stands, the canvas town, tents and pavilions without end, snowy white pennons and banners fluttering in the breeze; the royal standard high over all; richly dressed courtiers and men-at-arms moving about in crowds. It was a royal pageant, and no more fitting stage for it could have been prepared by nature. Here as elsewhere the island chiefs and their principal followers came down to prove their submission to such a superior force, among others the chiefs of Clanranald and Glengarry, and the guardian of the young chief of Clan Donald. Clanranald was made prisoner, and doubtless he and MacLeod cursed their hard fate in company. The eyes of the wild islanders who flocked to Portree must have stared "lang and sair" at the exhibition of pomp and power. James v., like most of the Stuarts, knew human nature well, and doubtless his expedition effected what centuries of fighting had failed to do. Like that great and loyal servant of his successors, Claverhouse, he understood and could manage the Highland chief as few Lowlanders have ever done. He returned homewards by Kyle-rhea, touching at Glenelg, and so to Kintyre and the Firth of Clyde. Some of the many prisoners were then released on providing hostages, but the bolder spirits were kept in durance until after the king's death in 1542.

From this date onwards, for the most part, the island chiefs were warm supporters of the House of Stuart which had conquered them. A Mackinnon of Strath was knighted by James vi. in 1604, and so was the famous Rory Mor of Dunvegan (whose sword still hangs on the wall of the castle) in 1610, while Donald Macdonald of Sleat was created a Nova Scotia baronet by Charles i. Macdonalds of the Isles and Mackinnons of Strath fought under

Montrose for the Royal Martyr against his enemies; and when Charles II. made the abortive attempt to win the kingdom in 1651, the Clan MacLeod mustered for him in full force, as did the Macdonalds. At the battle of Worcester, Norman MacLeod led his clan in person, and there so many of their number were killed that the northern clans agreed to let them have respite from military service until their full strength had been regained. Under Dundee, Macdonald of Sleat fought with seven hundred of his clansmen at Killiecrankie, for which his house in Sleat was burned by some of William's troops, who afterwards were defeated by him in a skirmish. His son fought with his clansmen in the '15 at Sheriffmuir, and was forfeited, the forfeiture being soon after removed. And in the '45, though the chiefs themselves did not go out, their clans were not found wanting in support of King James VIII. and his son the Prince of Wales. That eventful time invested the Isle of Skye with such a garb of romantic human interest as it has never since lost. An outlawed Prince, a protecting maiden; it is the case of chivalry inverted, and makes up such a story as time cannot wither, nor custom stale.

V.

When Prince Charles raised his standard at Glenshiel, he expected aid from the great chiefs of Skye and their clans. He therefore sent young Clanranald to find out from them what they were prepared to do. Clanranald met Sir Alexander Macdonald and MacLeod at the inn of Sconser, and there learned that they would do nothing. Unhappily for the Prince's cause (and there is little doubt that had they joined him with the full muster of their clans the king would have had his own again), President Forbes had moved them from their rightful allegiance, and both thenceforth supported the Hanoverian. MacLeod sent round

the fiery cross; his clansmen mustered at Caroy, a thousand strong; but when they found that their chief, like Macdonald, had accepted a commission from the German lairdie, and that they were to fight against the Prince, most of them went off on their own account to join him. MacLeod found he could only muster two hundred for the other side.

Sir Alexander Macdonald fared little better. He went to Trotternish to muster for George. As he mounted the hill above Portree, he was met at Drumuie by his tenant and clansman, Macdonald of Kingsburgh, who roundly told him the clan would not gather, and in fact he only got fifty followers.

With the history of the '45 we need not concern ourselves here. It was, alas, a lost cause, and after Culloden our sympathies are equally divided between the victims of the butcher Cumberland's cruelty and the Prince as he wandered, hunted and homeless, with a price on his head which tempted nobody. After Culloden he made his way to Glenboisdale; thence under the guidance of a Skyeman, Donald MacLeod of Gualtergill, he was carried in an eight-oared boat to Benbecula, and then to Lewis and South Uist. After months of wandering, in which it is a pleasure to know that Lady Margaret Macdonald sent him newspapers, the Prince and his party found themselves being gradually hemmed in on land by the Hanoverian soldiers and at sea by men-of-war. It was in this hour of extremity that Flora Macdonald came to the rescue. She was then on a visit to her brother in South Uist, and it was proposed to her that she should conduct the Prince to her mother's house at Armadale in Skye. To her the affair seemed hopeless, but loyalty kept her spirit undaunted. She was brought to the Prince in a hut on the night of 21st June 1746, and arrangements were duly made. A letter was sent by her stepfather to his wife at Armadale stating that Flora was returning home with an

Irish servant, Betty Burke (the Prince), under the charge of Neil MacEachan.

Meanwhile Lady Clanranald and Flora prepared a suitable dress for the Prince, who, disguised in a flowered linen gown, a quilted petticoat, white apron, and mantle with a hood, embarked with the heroine in a six-oared boat from Rossinish in South Uist on the night of 28th June. June nights are never dark in the Hebrides, but it was no summer sea which they crossed, for a storm had arisen. After eight hours' rowing on a tumultuous sea, Vaternish Point was reached, but a landing was impossible, for the redcoats were posted there and greeted them with a volley. Crossing the mouth of Loch Snizort, the party landed close by Monkstadt, the seat of Sir Alexander Macdonald.

The Prince waited on the hillside; Flora went forward to acquaint Lady Margaret, who had then as a guest in her house an officer of the militia regiment encamped near by. She, with Kingsburgh, who was then at Monkstadt, arranged the plan for the rest of the journey, but in great fear and trembling. While Flora dined with Lady Margaret and the militia officer, Kingsburgh went out with provisions for the Prince. He started up, ready to strike the intruder with his heavy knotted stick, when the latter cried, "I am Macdonald of Kingsburgh, come to serve your Highness."

In a short time the Prince (as Betty Burke), Flora, Kingsburgh, and a servant, started off for Kingsburgh House, intending there to pass the night. They followed the course of the present highroad by Uig. Betty could not manage her petticoats; "Your enemies call you a pretender," said Kingsburgh, "but if you be, you are the worst at your trade I ever saw." Now they were held up too high; now left to trail in the water as a burn was crossed. Some passers-by were shocked, or, as others thought, suspected the disguise. But all went well, and Kingsburgh was reached without

mishap. Here the Prince had a good meal and the luxury of an excellent bed, enjoying the latter so much that he slept till one next day.

Though the whole party knew the danger that threatened them, they could afford to find subject for merriment in the Prince's disguise as they gave it the finishing touches on his departure. A new pair of shoes was presented to him, Kingsburgh preserving his tattered brogues as a relic. To Flora he gave permission to "cut a lock frae his lang yellow hair." Then Flora and Neil set out, followed soon after by the Prince and Kingsburgh, in a drenching rain. In a wood at some distance from the house Charles changed his dress, and, taking leave of his host, went on towards Portree with a boy as his guide, probably following the present road thither from Kingsburgh.

The arrangement had meanwhile been made that the Prince should be taken to Raasay. Young Raasay (his father was then in hiding) was at Eyre House, the home of Dr. MacLeod, his brother (who had been wounded at Culloden), six miles from Portree. Donald Macdonald had been sent thither to inform them and to beg them to obtain a boat. This was no easy matter, as to ask for a boat in Portree was bound to arouse suspicion. But, remembering that there was a small boat on Loch Fada in the Storr valley, they proceeded thither to carry it to sea. What a laborious task this must have been! The boat had to be carried to the top of the cliff two miles off, and then brought down the precipitous face to the sea. All succeeded well; the boat was taken to Raasay, there Malcolm MacLeod and two boatmen joined the party, who then made for Portree, where the Prince was expected to be waiting. By this time Charles had reached the inn at Portree (the room where he sat is still shown in the Royal Hotel), and here Donald Macdonald met him. At the inn, after having obtained food, a dram (it had been raining

heavily), and tobacco, he tried, unsuccessfully, to get silver for a guinea. Then, having taken leave of Flora Macdonald, whom he said he trusted to see at St. James's yet, he slipped out and met the Raasay men.

It was by this time nearly midnight. The embarkation was made near the spot where the Prince's ancestor, James v., had landed with all the pomp of a king, and the boat's head was turned to Raasay. Here the Prince remained in hiding for two days in a hut, after which it was arranged that he should return to Skye. The whole party again embarked in a rough sea, Charles singing a Gaelic song to keep up the spirits of the rowers. A landing was effected under the cliffs at Nicolson's Rock, though with difficulty, as the east coast of Skye is no agreeable place in a storm. They toiled up the cliff, and camped, wet and weary, in a byre near the old house of Scorrybreck on the moor above Portree.[1] After a wretched meal of crumbled oatcakes and cheese, the Prince fell asleep, frequently starting up and crying, "Oh, poor England! oh, poor England!" All the party except Malcolm MacLeod now left him, and at seven the Prince and his faithful follower set out for Strath. Charles took the character of MacLeod's servant, but announced his intention of fighting to the death if they met any redcoats.

It was a long and tedious journey, over the roughest ground in Skye, and the travellers had only a bottle of brandy to sustain them. When it was finished, MacLeod hid the bottle under a bush, where he found it three years afterwards. It is difficult now to follow the route taken, as the fugitives went through byways to avoid notice; but they seem to have gone from Portree to Sligachan, walked up Glen Sligachan, crossed the

[1] The site of the byre is still pointed out, and is called in Gaelic, "the hollow of the byre." Prince Charlie's Cave, beautiful as it is, was never tenanted by the Prince. His well-ascertained movements allow no time for a stay there.

ridge between Glamaig and Marsco, dropped down on Loch Ainort, and then made their way by Strathmore to Elgol. Among the lonely Red Hills Charles said, truly enough, "I am sure the devil cannot find us now!" They thought it best to keep away from the house of the chief of the Mackinnons, and therefore made for Elgol beyond Kilmoree, where a sister of MacLeod's lived, married to a kinsman of the chief's. Thirty miles had been covered since the byre at Scorrybreck was left. At Elgol the fugitives were received by Mrs. Mackinnon, and there they had breakfast and a long rest in bed. When MacLeod awoke he found the Prince dandling his nephew in his arms and singing to him. By this time Mackinnon, who had been absent, was approaching the house. MacLeod ran to meet him, and told him whom he had for a guest, but cautioned him to take no notice of the Prince. The good man had all the emotion of a Celt, and he had no sooner entered his house and looked at his Prince than he burst into tears. Concealment was no longer possible before such tried devotion.

Mackinnon was now sent for a boat, and, meeting his chief, informed him of the Prince's arrival. He sent back his clansman, arranged to provide a boat, and presently arrived at the house, where, after doing homage, the aged chief led Charles to a cave, where Lady Mackinnon had carried a supply of food and wine. The chief, being on his own territory, now took control of affairs, and Malcolm, after an affectionate farewell, returned to his friends with messages from the Prince. Ten days later he was arrested.

The cave, which still bears the royal name, and lies near the south-east end of Loch Scavaig, was left at eight o'clock in the evening of Friday, 4th July, and the Prince and the two Mackinnons made for the mainland, although two ships of war were in sight. After a rough voyage, they reached Mallaig, thirty miles off, where Charles once more proceeded on his

wanderings, which lasted till 20th September, when he was able to embark for France! Thus ended his wanderings in Skye and the Highlands.

Many princes have fought and failed, but surely none ever failed with so good a grace as this Wanderer, the most fascinating and romantic of his romantic and fascinating line. In Skye, the story of his journeyings through the island is still preserved, for Skyemen can never forget the Prince's gratitude for their loyalty, nor the memory of their ancestors who fought and bled for his cause. They saw their beloved hills and glens no more, and now to-day

> "Lonely cairns are o er the men
> That fought and died for Charlie."

VI

After Culloden many interesting and romantic aspects of Highland life died away, but the country was no more subject to clan raids, and, becoming peaceful, was gradually opened up to the knowledge of the Southron. There is much to regret in what has for ever passed away—the patriarchal clan system had many merits which no other system can quite restore, but it was inevitable that the march of progress should touch the glens and islands and transform the life of the people as far as was possible. The visit of Dr. Johnson, the English moralist, to the Highlands in 1773, is symbolic of the welding together of the Southron and the Celt, and the growing consolidation of the Highlands with the other parts of the empire from which, in spirit at least, they had so long stood aloof.

The feeling with which this journey was regarded by Johnson and his faithful Boswell, as well as by their friends, shows that, for the most part, the Highlands were only then beginning to be regarded as other than barbarous. But there can be little doubt that the publication of Johnson's *Journey* and

Boswell's *Tour* brought about a revolution in regard to the ideas entertained about this region. It was seen that the journey had been easily accomplished, that civilisation existed in the Highlands, that the travellers had been treated *en prince*, and from that time onwards a gradually increasing stream of visitors penetrated to the wild north-west.

We are only concerned with that part of the journey which led the travellers through the Isle of Skye, and shall follow their footsteps through the island from day to day. On 2nd September they left Glenelg, opposite the coast of Sleat, by boat, and were rowed across the sound to Armadale. Here they were met by Sir Alexander Macdonald and his wife, and entertained by them in a house belonging to one of their tenants. The pilgrims "were now full of the Highland spirit," and tried in vain to rouse the English-bred chief to fitting feudal and patriarchal feelings.[1] Johnson was moved to compose his Latin ode to Skye, of which, if the Latinity is perfect, the sentiment is too much in the style of the bewigged Augustan age to do justice to the Green Isle of the West. After a four days' visit at Armadale, they set out on the 6th along the shore, then struck inland, probably near Knock, through the moorland to Broadford and the sea. Bending inland again, they reached the old house of Corricatachin, under the mighty shadow of Ben-na-Cailleach.

A large company was here assembled under the hospitable roof of Mackinnon and his wife, to meet the distinguished strangers and to show them something of "the joyous social manners of the Highlands." Johnson heard much of the second-sight, and indited an ode to his Thrale, "Let the shores of

[1] For some reason, Johnson and Boswell were filled with the idea that their host and hostess did not do all they might for them, and afterwards satirised them bitterly. But, judging from their report of the visit, they themselves did not keep to the politeness which is expected of a guest, and were as boorish as Sir Alexander was cold. The chief, in fact, seems to have been bored by his guests.

Skye learn the sweet name of Thrale." After breakfast on the 8th, they rode over to Sgianadan, a little north of Broadford, where the boat of the laird of Raasay was waiting them. They sailed up the narrow channel between Scalpa and Skye, Johnson perched high on the stern, "like a magnificent Triton," and the crew singing the stirring chorus of "Hachen foam." Johnson proposed to buy Scalpa, build a school and an Episcopal church on it, and set up a printing-press for the publication of Gaelic literature. They soon landed at Raasay, where the laird, who had been out in the '45, the chief of MacLeod, and many other lairds, met them, and there several days were spent in the pleasantest manner possible.

On Sunday the 12th they sailed from Raasay to Portree, and in that beautiful sound, beneath high mountains and cliffs, with the sea stretching to the remote northern horizon, Johnson solemnised his friends by speaking of death—that subject which at once fascinated and terrified him. They dined at the inn at Portree, where letters awaited them from the south, and then set out in a downpour, which irritated the moralist, for Kingsburgh. They followed, for the most part, the modern road thither, and were received by Macdonald of Kingsburgh and his wife, who was no less a person than Flora Macdonald. Boswell says with truth: "To see Dr. Samuel Johnson, the great champion of the English Tories, salute Miss Flora Macdonald in the Isle of Skye, was a striking sight." She had heard of their coming, but understood that the elephantine doctor was an English buck! Johnson slept in the bed in which the Prince had lain, but "had no ambitious thoughts about it," and in the course of his stay heard from Flora's lips the story of his wanderings.

Sending their horses by land to avoid the difficulties of the way, Kingsburgh conducted the pilgrims by boat to Greshornish; from there they

rode on to Dunvegan, reaching it in the afternoon of the 13th, by the track which still exists on the moorland above the present highroad. Here Johnson "tasted lotus," saw the wonders of the castle, discoursed in his *ex cathedrâ* way on all things, and spoke of keeping a harem. This so overcame the flighty Boswell, that he burst into a loud guffaw, and was at once castigated with such biting wit and variety of degrading images, as shamed him. The party visited Rory Mor's Cascade, which still splashes over the rocks as it did when they admired it, the temple of Anaitis, the old church with its pyramid in memory of Lord Lovat, and all the other lions of the place, and probably Johnson was as happy here in the company of MacLeod, his mother and sisters, as ever he had been in his life.

Tuesday, 21st September, saw the travellers on their way to Uilinish, eight miles from Dunvegan, and they must have followed the line of route which the present highroad now takes. Uilinish was then tenanted by a MacLeod who was sheriff-substitute for Skye, and whose daughter, as Boswell explains, though well bred, had never been out of the island. Several interesting antiquities were visited, the earth-house (over which Johnson and Dr. MacQueen had, as usual, a controversy), Dun Beag, and the cave in Harlosh Island, and these visits, with much cultured conversation, occupied two days. Johnson's knowledge and style of talking impressed Uilinish, as they did most people: "He is a great orator, sir; it is music to hear this man speak." Setting out by boat, the travellers, with MacQueen (who seems to have let his parochial duties slip during the visit), crossed Loch Bracadale, and entering Loch Harport, landed at Fernilea after a pleasant sail over the waters. From there they rode across the hill to the green vale of Talisker, where they were entertained by Colonel MacLeod and met the young laird of Col, "a little lively young man," who planned much of their future journeying. They set out from Talisker

on the 25th, recrossed the hill, and following the valley of Glen Drynoch, passed Glen Sligachan, and, coming under Glamaig, arrived at Sconser inn, where, twenty-eight years before, the island chiefs had met Clanranald, the Prince's messenger. Sending their horses over Drum-na-Cloich, they came by boat out of Loch Sligachan and through the channel between Scalpa and Skye to Strolimus, whence they rode once more to hospitable Corricatachin.

They arrived at midnight; Johnson went to bed, Boswell sat up drinking, and it was five in the morning before *he* got to bed. He awoke at noon on Sunday with a headache, only to be told by his governor, as MacQueen called him, that he, drunken dog, had kept the others up. When Boswell did come downstairs, he took up Mrs. Mackinnon's prayer-book, and his eyes lighted on the words, "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess." His surroundings were too strong for him, and on the whole it was a merry party assembled at Corricatachin, and we are scarcely surprised that next evening Johnson took one of the ladies on his knee and kissed her. From Mrs. Mackinnon he got many details of the Prince's wanderings, and his whispering with her amused the guests. Seeing their nods and smiles, she cried out, "I am in love with him! What is it to live and not to love?" On all these convivial Celts, Johnson made a lively impression. "Honest man," they one and all said as he left Corricatachin on Tuesday.

Ostaig, in Sleat, was the last house in which the wanderers were entertained, and here Johnson wrote the famous letter to MacLeod, which is preserved at Dunvegan. Bad weather detained them "on the margin of the sea," and it was not till Sunday, 3rd October, that they finally left Skye, not without some heaviness of heart, the natural result of paying adieu to the kindness they had met with. For them the visit had been charming, and to a Johnsonian no pilgrimage could be more delightful than to follow

their footsteps in Skye, the *Tour* and *Journey* in hand. Skye is much as it was then; the hills and lochs and moors are as Johnson and Boswell saw them; and of the houses where they stayed some at least remain. Dunvegan Castle may be haunted with the portly form of the doctor; his portrait, by Reynolds, hangs on the wall; near it is his Ostaig letter; some of the books in the library his scholarly eye must have glanced at.

By the time that Scott visited Skye in the light-house yacht, it had become well known to visitors from the south. He saw but little of it, though of that little he made excellent use in the *Lord of the Isles*. Having sailed round the north of Scotland, the yacht, after visiting Harris, arrived in Dunvegan Loch on the 23rd of August 1814. Scott saw the lions, as Johnson had done, made a mistake, equal to Oldbuck's, over the famous cup, and slept in the Fairy Room, where he felt duly eerie. The yacht sailed again on the 25th, following the coast of Skye southwards to Loch Scavaig, where the famous visit to Coruisk was paid, and to the loch Scott did due justice in his diary and poem. The same day the yacht reached Loch Slapin; a landing was made at the Spar Cave, not then shorn of its finest beauty; and here Scott's descriptive powers were taxed to the full. From thence sail was made for the island of Eigg.

From the visit to Dunvegan sprang up a friendship with the family of MacLeod, witnessed to by a number of charming letters, and presentation copies of the *Secret Commonwealth* and the *Lord of the Isles*. With the latter the poet sent a poet's letter, which is worth quoting.

"Dear Madam,—I have been postponing from day to day requesting your kind acceptance of my best thanks for the beautiful purse of your workmanship with which I was some time since honoured. The hospitality of Dunvegan will long live in my

recollection, and I am not a little flattered by a token which infers that my visit was not forgotten by the Lady of the castle. I venture to send (what has long delayed this letter) a copy of a poem which owes its best passages to MacLeod's kindness and taste in directing me to visit the extraordinary scenery between his country and Strathaird, which rivals in grandeur and desolate sublimity anything that the Highlands can produce. The volume should have reached you in a quarto shape, but while I sought an opportunity of sending it, behold the quartos disappeared, and I was obliged to wait for the second impression, of which I now send a copy. I shall be proud and happy if it serves to amuse a leisure hour at Dunvegan. It has had one good consequence to the author, that it has served to replenish the purse with which the Lady MacLeod presented him. Yet he has so much the spirit of the old Bard, that he values the purse more than the contents. Should MacLeod and you ever come to Edinburgh, I will scarce forgive you unless you let such a hermit as I am know of your living in the neighbourhood of his recess, and I would have particular pleasure in endeavouring to show you anything that might interest you. I do not despair of (what would give me the most sincere pleasure) again being a guest at Dunvegan. My eldest girl sings Cathail gu la—excuse Saxon spelling—and I hope to send you in a few weeks a very curious treatise on the second sight, published (not for sale) from a manuscript in 1691 which fell into my hands.[1] Hector Macdonald has promised me the means to send it.

"I beg my respectful compliments to Miss MacLeod, my kindest remembrances to the chieftain, and my best wishes to the little tartan chief and nursery.—Believe me, with much respect, Dear

[1] This is the famous work by Theophilus Insulanus, a Skyeman, which forms an appendix to Scott's edition of the *Secret Commonwealth*.

Madam (for I will not say Mrs. MacLeod, and Lady MacLeod is out of fashion), Your honoured and obliged and truly grateful, WALTER SCOTT."

"EDINBURGH, *3rd March*, 1815."

Probably no more characteristic or genial letter of Scott's exists. He never visited the castle again, but his friendship with the MacLeods is borne witness to by many letters at Dunvegan, preserved with pious care.

Since Scott's day Skye has been visited and praised by many men of letters. Tennyson came here in his young days, but wrote nothing about it. Alexander Smith, having married a daughter of the island, did it more justice. Everybody knows, or should know, his poem on Blaaven: he wrote the racy *Summer in Skye* (three summer holidays, if truth be told); and introduced his wife's home at Ord into *Alfred Hagart's Household*. Robert Louis Stevenson met Edmund Gosse on the steamer at Portree, and was duly fascinated with the charms of the island which his father had loved so well. And has he not told us how "some of the brightest moments of my life were passed over tinned mulligatawny in the cabin of a 16-ton schooner storm-stayed in Portree Bay"?

The island itself has had many bards of its own, who have sung its praises in Gaelic. They are known and revered by the people, who can recite and sing their poems for hours together. And for the ignorant Sassenach who, poor being, has no Gaelic, the late Sheriff Nicolson, himself a Skyeman and beloved by all who knew him, made many a beautiful and ringing line descriptive of its charms. Did he not sing—

> "Dunedin is queenly and fair,
> None feels it more than I;
> But in the prime of summer-time,
> Give me the Isle of Skye!"

From the days of Cuchullainn and Fingal to the

present time, many a dim century has come and gone! But one well-known figure after another links the centuries together, and as we wander by blue loch and purple moorland many ghosts rise and glide before us. There are the gigantic forms of the mythic heroes of past time; there is blessed Columba preaching the gospel of peace. We see Haco's fleet gliding down the dark blue sound, with brazen shields and golden prows flashing in the sun. We see the brilliant array of the Scottish court assembled at Portree, and that kingly figure, who loved not wisely but too well, coming out of his splendid pavilion, clad in all the glory of a king. And here is one, who bears a royal presence, clad in torn and stained tartans, tramping bravely over the heather, smiling and singing, though he knows himself hunted and a price set on his head. And who is this florid and stout gentleman, so slovenly in his dress, who rallies his elegant friend with notebook and pencil, or in a grumbling tone says, "Sir, it is very disagreeable riding in Skye"? We need not give him a name, nor that other kindly ghost with the broad lowland face, who ambles past with animated voice and gesture. Honest Johnson and dear Sir Walter, it adds to our love for Skye to know that you have trod her shores and appreciated her beauties and her people. In their traditions you are enshrined along with these royal and saintly and mythic figures of the voiceless past.

APPENDIX

LIST OF THE FLORA OF SKYE.

Achillea millefolium, Yarrow.
ptarmica, Sneezewort.
Aegopodium podagraria, Bishopweed.
Ajuga reptans, Common bugle.
Alchemilla alpina, Alpine lady's-mantle.
argentea, Silver lady's-mantle.
arvensis, Field lady's-mantle.
vulgaris, Common lady's-mantle.
Allium ursinum, Broad-leaved garlic.
Anchusa sempervirens, Evergreen alkanet (at Ose, probably a garden escape).
Anemone nemorosa, Wood anemone.
Angelica sylvestris, Wild angelica.
Antennaria dioica, Mountain everlasting.
Anthyllis vulneraria, Lady's-fingers.
Apium graveolens, Wild celery.
Arabis alpina, Alpine rock-cress.
hirsuta, Hairy rock-cress.
petræa, Mountain rock-cress.
Arenaria peploides, Sea purslane.
serpyllifolia, Thyme-leaved sandwort.
Armeria maritima, Sea-pink.
Asperula odorata, Sweet woodruff.
Aster tripolium, Sea starwort.

Ballota nigra, Black horehound.
Bartsia odontites, Red bartsia.
Bellis perennis, Common daisy.
Brassica campestris, Navew.
sinapistrum, Wild mustard.

Calluna erica, Ling or heather (white and purple).
Caltha palustris, Marsh marigold.
Cardamine pratensis, Lady's-smock.
Carduus pycnocephalus, Slender-flowered thistle.
Carum verticillatum, Whorled caraway.
Centaurea nigra, Black knapweed.
scabiosa, Great knapweed.
Cerastium triviale, Wayside mouse-ear chickweed.
Chenopodium polyspermum, Many-seeded goose-foot.
Chrysanthemum leucanthemum, Ox-eye daisy.
parthenium, Feverfew.
segetum, Yellow ox-eye
Chrysoptenium oppositofolium, Common golden saxifrage.
Circæa lutetiana, Enchanter's nightshade.
Cnicus arvensis, Creeping plume-thistle.
heterophyllus, Melancholy plume-thistle.
lanceolatus, Spear plume-thistle.
palustris, Marsh plume-thistle.
Cochlearia alpina, Alpine scurvy-grass.
anglica, English scurvy-grass.
danica, Danish scurvy-grass.
officinalis, Common scurvy-grass.
Conopodium denudatum, Pignut.
Cytisus scoparius, Broom.

Daucas carota, Wild carrot.
Digitalis purpurea, Foxglove.
Drosera anglica, Great-leaved sundew
intermedia, Intermediate sundew.
longifolia, Long-leaved sundew.
protundifolia, Round-leaved sundew.

Epilobium adnatum, Square-stalked willow herb.
montanum, Broad smooth-leaved willow herb.
palustre, Narrow-leaved marsh willow herb.
Erica cinerea, Fine-leaved heath.
tetralix, Cross-leaved heath.
Eriocaulon septangulare, Pipewort.
Eriophorum angustifolium, Common cotton-grass.
vaginatum, Hare's-tail cotton-grass.
Erophila vulgaris, Long-podded Whitlow-grass.
Erythræa centaurium, Common centaury.
Euphorbia helioscopia, Sun-spurge.
Euphrasia officinalis, Eyebright.

Fragaria vesca, Wood strawberry.

Galeopsis angustifolia, Common red hemp-nettle.
tetrahit, Common hemp-nettle.
Galium aparine, Goose-grass.
boreale, Cross-leaved bedstraw.
mollugo, Hedge bedstraw.
palustre, Water bedstraw.
Gentiana campestris, Field gentian.

Geranium molle, Dove's foot crane's bill.
pusillum, Small-flowered crane's bill.
robertianum, Herb Robert.
Geum dryas octopetala, Limestone mountain avens.
intermedium.
rivale, Water avens.
urbanum, Herb-benet.
Glaux maritima, Sea milkwort.
Gnaphalium norvegicum, Highland cudweed
superium, Dwarf cudweed.
uliginosum, Marsh cudweed.

Habenaria albida, Small white Habenaria.
bifolia, Lesser butterfly orchis.
chloroleuca, Greater butterfly orchis.
conopsea, Sweet-scented orchis.
viridis, Frog orchis.
Heracleum sphondylium, Cow parsnip.
Hippuris vulgaris, Mare's-tail.
Hychæris radiata, Long-rooted cat's-ear.
Hypericum dubium, Imperforate St. John's wort.
pulchrum, Small upright St. John's wort.
perforatum, Common St. John's wort.

Iris pseudacorus, Yellow iris.

Juniperus nana, Dwarf juniper.

Lactuca virosa, Acrid lettuce.
Lamium intermedium, Intermediate dead-nettle.
purpureum, Purple dead-nettle.
Lathyrus montanus, Tuberous bitter vetch.
pratensis, Meadow vetchling.
Lapsana communis, Nipplewort.
Leontodon autumnalis, Autumn hawk-bit.
hirtus, Hairy hawk-bit.
hispidus, Rough hawk-bit.
Linum catharticum, Cathartic flax.
Listera cordata, Heart-leaved tway-blade.
ovata, Tway-blade.
Lobelia dortmanna, Water lobelia.
Loiseleuria procumbens, Trailing azalea.
Lonicera periclymenum, Honey-suckle.
Lotus corniculatus, Bird's-foot trefoil.
Lychnis dioica, Red campion.
flos-cuculi, Ragged-robin.
Lysimachia nemorum, Yellow pimpernel.

Malva rotundifolia, Dwarf mallow.
sylvestris, Common mallow.
Mentha arvensis, Corn-mint.
Menyanthes trifoliata, Buck-bean.
Mimulus luteus, Yellow monkey-flower.
Myosotis arvensis, Field scorpion-grass.
cespitosa, Tufted water scorpion-grass.
collina, Early field scorpion-grass.
palustris, Forget-me-not.
repens, Creeping water scorpion-grass.
sylvatica, Wood forget-me-not.
versicolor, Parti-coloured scorpion-grass.
Myosurus minimis, Mouse-tail.
Myrica gale, Bog-myrtle.

Narthecum ossifragum, Bog asphodel.
Nasturtium officinale, Water-cress.
Nepeta cataria, Catmint.
glechoma, Ground ivy.

Onobrychis viciæfolia, Common sainfoin.
Orchis incarnata, Crimson marsh orchis.
latifolia, Marsh orchis.
maculata, Spotted orchis.
mascula, Early purple orchis.
Orobanche rubra, Red broom-rape.
Oxalis acetosella, Wood sorrel.
Oxyria digyna, Mountain sorrel.

Parnassia palustris, Grass of Parnassus.
Pedicularis palustris, Marsh red-rattle.
silvatica, Dwarf red-rattle (also a white variety).
Petasites officinalis, Butter-bur.
Pinguicula alpina, Alpine butterwort.
lusitanica, Pale butterwort.
vulgaris, Common butterwort.
Plantago lanceolata, Ribwort plantain.
major, Greater plantain.
Polygala vulgaris, Milkwort.
Polygonatum multiflorum, Solomon's seal (garden escape ?).
Polygonum aviculare, Common knot-grass.
convolvulus, Black bindweed.
cuspidatum, Japanese knotweed (?).
lapathifolium, Pale-flowered Persicaria.
persicaria, Common Persicaria.
Potentilla anserina, Silverweed.
palustris, Marsh cinquefoil.
reptans, Creeping cinquefoil.
silvestris, Tormentil.
Primula acaulis, Primrose.
Prunella vulgaris, Self-heal (also a white variety).
Pyrola minor, Lesser winter-green.

Ranunculus acris, Buttercup.
aquatilis, Water crowfoot.
bulbosus, Bulbous buttercup.
ficaria, Lesser celandine.
flammula, Lesser spearwort.
parviflorus, Small-flowered crowfoot.
petiolaris.
repens, Creeping buttercup.
sardous, Pale hairy buttercup.
Rhinanthus crista-galli, Yellow rattle

Rosa canina, Dog-rose.
pimpinelli olia, Burnet rose.
rubiginosa, Sweet briar.
Rubus fruticosus, Bramble.
idæus, Raspberry.
Rumex acetosa, Sorrel.
sanguineus, Bloody-veined dock.

Sangina apetala, Annual pearlwort.
Linnæi, Alpine pearlwort.
maritima, Sea pearlwort.
procumbens, Procumbent pearlwort.
Salex herbacea, Least willow.
repens, Dwarf silky willow.
Sanicula europæa, Wood sanicle.
Saussurea alpina, Alpine saussurea.
Saxifraga aizoides, Yellow mountain saxifrage.
hirculus, Yellow marsh saxifrage.
hypnoides, Mossy saxifrage.
stellaris, Starry saxifrage.
umbrosa, London pride (garden escape?).
Scabiosa arvensis, Field scabious.
succisa, Devil's bit scabious.
Scilla festalis, Wild hyacinth (also a white variety).
Scrophularia aquatica, Water figwort.
nodosa, Knotted figwort.
Scutellaria galericulata, Greater skull-cap.
Sedum anglicum, English stonecrop.
dasyphyllum, Thick-leaved stone-crop.
roseum, Rose-root.
villosum, Hairy stonecrop.
Senecio Jacobæa, Common ragwort.
vulgaris, Common groundsel.
Sherardia arvensis, Field madder.
Silene acaulis, Moss campion
cucubalus, Bladder campion.
maritima, Sea campion.
Solidago virgaurea, Golden-rod.
Spergula arvensis, Corn spurrey.
Spiræ ulmaria, Meadow-sweet.
Stachys betonica, Wood betony.
palustris, Marsh woundwort.
silvatica, Hedge woundwort.
Stellaria media, Chickweed.

Taraxacum officinale, Dandelion.
Teucrium scorodonia, Woodsage.
Thymus serpyllum, Mountain thyme.
Tofieldia palustris, Bogasphodel.
Trifolium dubium, Lesser yellow trefoil.
pratense, Red clover.
repens, White clover.
Trollius europæus, Globeflower.
Tussilago farfara, Coltsfoot.

Ulex europæus, Common furze.
Urtica dioica, Great nettle.
urens, Small nettle.

Vaccinium myrtillus, Blaeberry.
uliginosum, Bog whortleberry.
Valeriana dioica, Marsh valerian.
Veronica chamædrys, Germander speedwell.
montana, Mountain speedwell.
officinalis, Common speedwell.
serpyllifolia, Thyme-leaved speedwell.
Vicia cracca, Tufted vetch.
orobus, Wood vetch.
sativa, Common vetch.
sepium, Bush vetch.
Viola ericetorum, Dog violet.
palustris, Marsh violet.
raviniana, Dark wood violet.
silvestris, Pale wood violet.
tricolor, Heartsease.
Volvulus sepium, Great bindweed.

FERNS.

Allosorus crispus, Parsley fern.
Asplenium adiantum nigrum, Black maidenhair spleenwort.
marinum, Sea spleenwort.
ruta muraria, Wall-rue.
trichomanes, Common maidenhair spleenwort.
Athyrium filix fœmina, Ladyfern (several varieties).

Blechnum spicant, Hard fern (a bifurcated variety is found).
Botrychium lunaria, Moonwort.

Cysopteris montana, Mountain bladder fern.

Hymenophyllium tunbridgense, Tunbridge filmy fern.

Lastræa dilatata, Broad buckler fern.
montana, Mountain buckler fern.
cristata, Crested buckler fern.
felix-mas, Male fern (several varieties).

Osmunda regalis, Royal fern.

Polypodium dryopteris, Oak fern.
phegopteris, Beech fern.
vulgare, Common polypody.
Polystichum aculeatum, Hard prickly shield.
angulare, Soft prickly shield.
lonchitis, Holly fern.
Pteris aquilina, Bracken.

Scolopendrium vulgare, Hartstongue (two varieties).

Woodsia alpina, Alpine woodsia.

THE FAUNA OF SKYE.

Abbreviations, *O.V.* = Occasional visitant; *S.V.* = Summer visitant; *W.V.* = Winter visitant.

1. Mammals.

Arvicola agrestis, Field vole.
amphibia, Water vole.

Bos taurus, Ox (domestic).

Canis familiaris, Dog (domestic).
Skye is famed for its terriers (otter hounds).
Capræolus capræa, Roe deer.
Cervus elaphus, Red deer.
Equus caballa, Horse (domestic).
Erinaceus europæus, Hedgehog.

Felis catus, Wild cat.

Lepus cuniculus, Rabbit.
europæus, Brown hare.
variabilis, Varying hare.
Lutra vulgaris, Otter.

Mus decumanus, Brown rat.
minutus, Harvest mouse.
musculus, Common mouse.
rattus, Black rat.
sylvaticus, Wood mouse.
Mustela erminea, Stoat.
vulgaris, Weasel.

Ovis aries, Sheep (domestic).

Phoca vitulina, Seal.
Phocæna communis, Porpoise.

Sorex vulgaris, Shrew.

Talpa europæa, Mole.

Walrus has been seen off the coast. The sperm, rorqual, bottle-nose, thrasher, and white whale are observed from time to time.

2. Birds.

Accentor modularis, Hedge-sparrow.
Accipiter nisus, Sparrow-hawk.
Acredula caudata, Long-tailed tit.
Aegialalus hiaticula, Winged plover.
Alauda arvensis, Skylark, *s.v.*
Alca torda, Razorbill, *s.v.*
Alcedo ispida, Kingfisher, *o.v.*
Ampelis garrulus, Waxwing, *o v.*
Anas boschas, Mallard.
Anser cinereus, Greylag goose, *w.v.*
Anthus obscurus, Rook.
pratensis, Meadow-pipit, *s.v.*

Aquilo chrysætos, Golden eagle.
Archibuteo vulgaris, R. L. Buzzard, *s.v.*
Ardea cinerea, Heron.
Asio accipitrinus, Short-eared owl.
otus, Long-eared owl.
Astur palumbarius, Goshawk, *s.v.*

Bernicla brenta, Brent goose, *w.v.*
leucopsis, Barnacle goose, *w.v.*
Botaurus stellaris, Bittern goose, *o.v.*
Buteo vulgaris, Buzzard.

Caprimulgus europæus, Swift, *s.v.*
Carduelis elegans, Goldfinch, *o.v.*
Certhia familiaris, Creeper.
Charadrius pluvialis, Gold plover.
Chelidon urbica, House-martin, *s.v.*
Cinclus aquaticus, Water-ouzel.
Circus æruginosus, Marsh harrier, *o.v.*
cyaneus, Hen harrier.
Clangula glaucion, Golden eye, *w.v.*
Columba livia, Rock-dove.
palumbus, Wood-pigeon.
Colymbus arcticus, Black-throated diver *o.v.*
glacialis, Great northern diver, *w.v.*
septentrionalis, Red-throated diver, *w.v.*
Corvus corax, Raven.
corone, Carrion crow.
cornix, Hooded crow.
frugilegus, Rook.
monedula, Jackdaw.
Crex pratensis, Landrail.
Cuculus canorus, Cuckoo, *s.v.*
Cygnus musicus, Whooper swan, *w.v.*
Cypselus apus, Swift, *o.v.*

Emberiza citrinella, Yellow-hammer.
miliaria, Corn-bunting.
schoeniclus, Reed-bunting.
Erythaca rubecula, Robin.

Falco æsalon, Merlin.
candicans, Greenland falcon, *o.v.*
islandus, Iceland falcon, *o.v.*
peregrinus, Peregrine falcon.
Fratercula arctica, Puffin, *s.v.*
Fringilla coelebs, Chaffinch.
Fulica atra, Coot.
Fulmarus glacialis, Fulmar, *o.v.*

Gallinago coelestis, Snipe.
gallinula, Jack-snipe, *w.v.*
major, Great snipe.
Gallinula chloropus, Water-hen.

Hæmotopus ostralegus, Oyster-catcher.
Haliætus albicilla, White-tailed eagle.
Harelda glacialis, Long-tailed duck, *w.v.*
Hirundo rustica, Swallow, *s.v.*

Lagopus mutus, Ptarmigan.
scoticus, Grouse.
Larus argentatus, Herring-gull.
canus, Common gull.
fuscus, Lesser black-backed gull.
glaucus, Glaucous gull, *Rare w.v.*
leucopterus, Iceland gull, *Rare.*
marinus, Great black-backed gull, *o.v.*
minutus, Little gull, *o.v.*
ridibundus, Black-headed gull, *o.v.*
Linota cannabina, Linnet.
flavirostris, Twite.
rufescens, Lesser redpoll, *s.v.*
Locustella nœvia, Grasshopper warbler, *s.v.*
Lomvia troile, Common guillemot, *s.v.*

Mareca penelope, Widgeon, *w.v.*
Mergulus alle, Little auk, *Rare w.v.*
Mergus merganser, Goosander, *w.v.*
serrator, Red-breasted merganser.
Milvus ictinus, Kite.
Motacilla lugubris, Pied wagtail, *s.v.*
melanope, Grey wagtail, *s.v.*
Muscicapa grisola, Spotted fly-catcher, *s.v.*

Numenius arquata, Curlew.
phæopus, Whimbrel, *s.v.*
Nyctea scandiaca, Snowy owl, *o.v.*

Oedemia nigra, Common scoter.

Pandion haliætus, Osprey, *o.v.*
Parus ater, Coal-tit.
cæruleus, Blue-tit.
major, Great tit, *o.v.*
Passer domesticus, House-sparrow.
montanus, Tree-sparrow.
Pastor roseus, Rose pastor, *o.v.*
Perdrix cinerea, Partridge.
Phalacrocorax carbo, Cormorant.
graculus, Shag.
Phalaropus hyperboreus, Red-necked phalarope.
Phasianus colchicus, Pheasant.
Phylloscopus trochilus, Willow-wren, *s.v.*
Pica rustica, Magpie, *o.v.*
Plectrophanes nivalis, Snow-bunting, *w.v.*
Podiceps auritus, Sclavonian grebe, *o.v.*
fluviatilis, Dabchick, *w.v.*
griseigena, Red-necked grebe, *o.v.*
Pratincola rubetra, Whinchat, *s.v.*
rubicola, Stonechat, *s.v.*
Procellaria pelagica, Stormy petrel, *s.v.*
Puffinus anglorum, Manx shearwater, *s.v.*
major, Greater shearwater, *o.v.*
Pyrrhocorax graculus, Chough.
Pyrrhula europæa, Bullfinch.

Querquedula crecca, Teal, *w.v.*

Rallus aquaticus, Water-rail.
Regulus cristatus, Goldcrest.
Rissa tridactyla, Kittiwake.

Saxicola œnanthe, Wheatear, *s.v.*
Scolopax rusticula, Woodcock, *w.v.*
Sitta cæsia, Nuthatch, *o.v.*
Somateria mollissima, Eider, *w.v.*
Stercorarius crepidatus, Richardson's skua, *o.v.*
Sterna fluviatilis, Common tern, *s.v.*
macrura, Arctic tern, *s.v.*
Strepsilas interpres, Turnstone, *s.v.*
Strix flammea, Barn owl.
Sturnus vulgaris, Starling.
Sula bassana, Gannet, *s.v.*
Sylvia misoria, Barred warbler, *o.v.*
rufa, Whitethroat, *s.v.*

Tadorna cornuta, Sheldrake.
Tetrao parvulus, Blackcock.
Tinnunculus alaudarius, Kestrel.
Totanus calidris, Redshank, *s.v.*
canescens, Greenshank, *s.v.*
hypoleucos, Common sandpiper, *s.v.*
Tringa alpina, Dunlin, *o.v.*
canutus, Knot, *o.v.*
striata, Purple sandpiper, *s.*
Troglodytes parvulus, Common wren.
Turdus iliacus, Redwing, *w.v.*
merula, Blackbird.
musicus, Song-thrush.
pilaris, Fieldfare, *w.v.*
torquatus, Ring-ouzel, *s.v.*
viscivorus, Missel-thrush.
Turtur communis, Turtle-dove.

Uria grylle, Black guillemot.

Vannellus vulgaris, Lapwing, *s.v.*

In compiling this list of birds, I have made some use of a paper on "The Birds of Skye," by the late Rev. H. A. MacPherson, M.A., of Glendale (*Proceedings*, Royal Physical Society, 1886).

3. Reptilia.

Anguis fragilis, Blindworm.

Lacerta vivipara, Common lizard.

Vipera verus, Common adder.

4. Amphibia.

Bufo vulgaris, Toad.

Rana temporaria, Frog.

Triton punctatus, Common newt.

Among the fresh-water fish the salmon, sea, brown, and rainbow trout are the best known.

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